

# Insight Journal

Fall 2004

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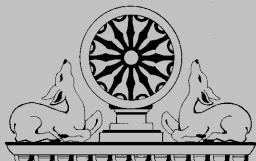
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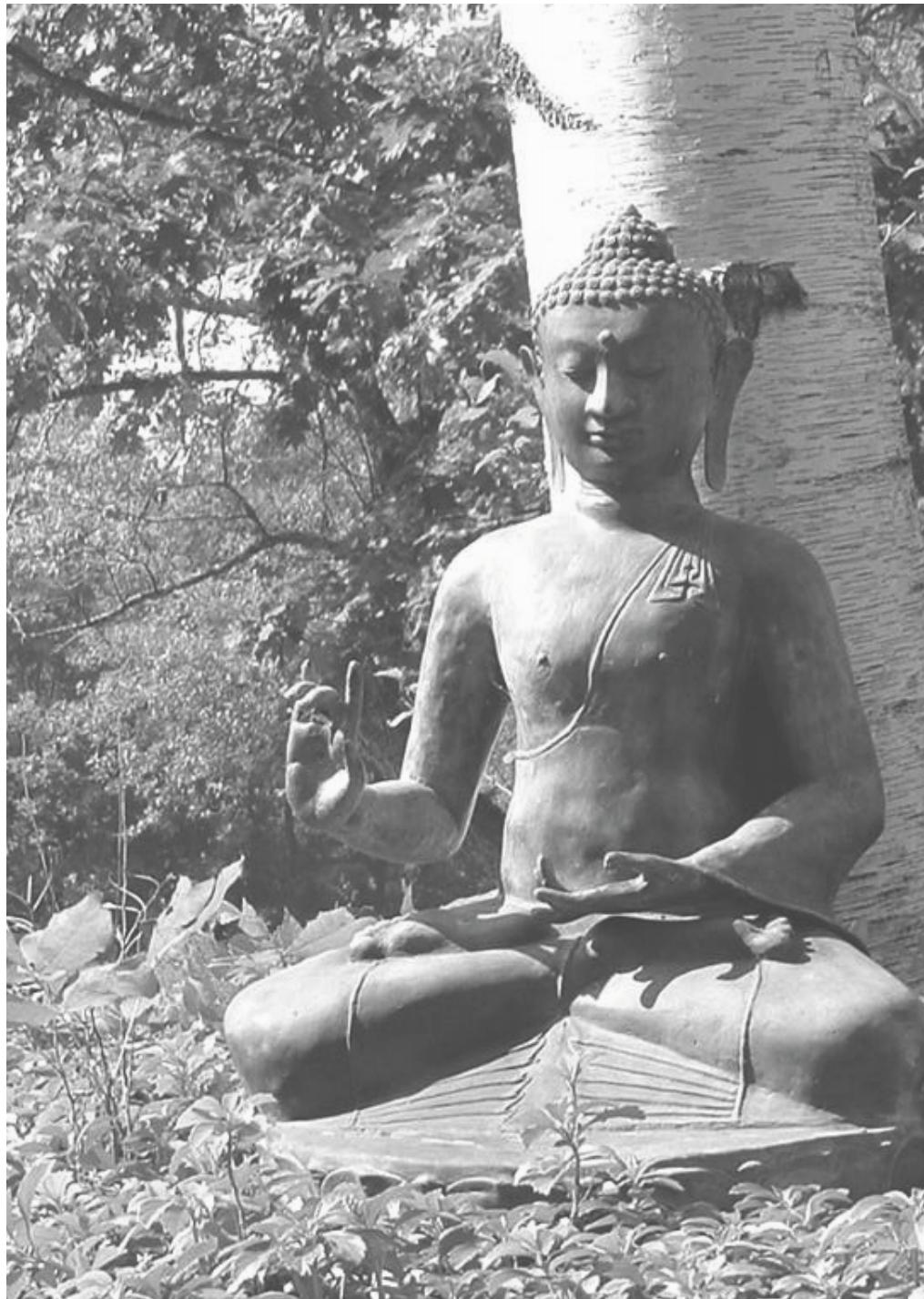
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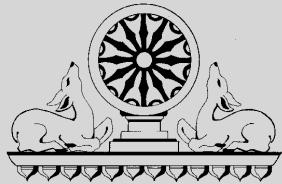
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## Barre Center for Buddhist Studies

Address: 149 Lockwood Rd.  
Barre, MA 01005

Phone: (978) 355-2347

Fax: (978) 355-2798

E-Mail: bcbs@dharma.org

Web Site: www.dharma.org

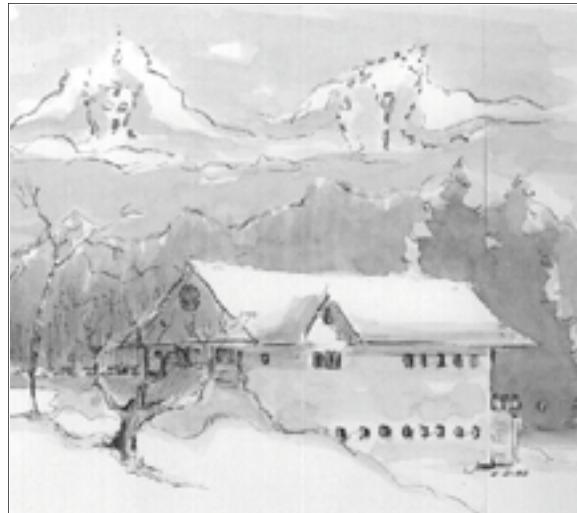
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Insight involves an intuition of mind and heart that takes us beyond knowledge toward wisdom. It has to do with deeply understanding the nature of things, rather than knowing a lot about them.

In the Buddhist tradition wisdom is nurtured by the deep investigation of experience. This involves the careful integration of both study and practice—the study of Buddha's teachings (Dhamma), and the practice of meditation.

This journal is dedicated to exploring some of the insights that such a balanced inquiry uncovers about our ourselves, our world, and our fellow beings. Please join us.



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## War and Peace

As Buddhists understand things, the outer world unfolding around us is largely a reflection of inner states. Yes, there might be some “stuff” out there from which the material life support systems are woven, but the rich world of human experience is a virtual world, constructed of mental states, feelings, perceptions and various forms of intention.

First the bad news: the mess we are making of our planet is caused by our own greed, hatred and delusion. Aside from the existential afflictions of aging, death and at least some of the illnesses, every instance we see of human misery, injustice, affliction or pain will, upon sufficient investigation, be shown to be rooted in someone’s attachment, aversion or ignorance.

Now the good news: each of the unwholesome roots of human behavior has an equal and opposite wholesome root. Generosity and renunciation stand as the antithesis of greed, kindness and compassion are at hand as alternatives to hatred, and wisdom is accessible as an antidote to delusion. Despite the headlines, the human realm is suffused with countless daily episodes of goodness, and a great deal of what gets created by people each moment is wonderful.

At the heart of the human condition lies the capability to choose between wholesome and unwholesome attitudes. It might often feel like we have no choice, because of layers of behavioral conditioning or the influence of powerful persuasive forces. And it may also be that many of the choices we make are unexamined, unconscious, and thus don’t feel like choices at all. But this ability to decide, to deliberately give energy to either wholesome or unwholesome inclinations, to steer a course, if you will, between one option and another, is something precious that distinguishes us from machines or animals.

Which brings us to the matter of war and peace. Of what mental states is each the projection? While outwardly war is characterized by distrust, violence and a whole lot of killing, these are the manifestations of inner states of turmoil, fear, anger, hatred and cruelty. The “guardians of the world,” the twin pillars of conscience called self-respect (*hiri*) and respect for the opinion others (*ottappa*) are absent, which unleashes all sorts of demons from within us.

Peace is characterized by such outward features as harmony, honesty, mutual respect and cooperation. The inner states generating these activities include such factors as tranquility, kindness, compassion and unselfishness. The guardians are alert, and protect us from expressing some of the darker impulses that lie lurking in the shadows of our psyche.

If humans are defined by the ability to choose, why would anyone deliberately chose war over peace? Most people would agree it is preferable to be at peace when there is no threat, and many would acknowledge the need to be at war when absolutely necessary to protect oneself or others. A mind at war is organized around unwholesome qualities, and makes room for the wholesome only briefly and reluctantly. A mind at peace, organized around wholesome states of mind, may still evoke

the unwholesome qualities needed from time to time to deal with a threat, but otherwise rests easy.

What is at issue between these two postures is the karmic consequences of the intermediary and ancillary states. In war mode, all mental states will be generating unwholesome effects, even those which arise and pass away in between the occasional episodes of necessary unwholesomeness. In peace mode, wholesome effects are produced by default, working wholesome changes upon oneself and the world.

In other words, a peaceful person who must from time to time muster war-like qualities to ensure her survival or to protect the innocent, will generate wholesome karma most of the time—except in those brief moments when harder stuff is called for. By contrast, a person geared-up in war mode is producing unwholesome effects beyond what is minimally required by the duty to safeguard oneself and others. Such a person will also experience episodes of peacefulness from time to time, but these will be rare in the context of an on-going unwholesome intentional stance.

If a person feels threatened, he may hold himself continually on a war footing—suspicious, aggressive, violent—and feel this is what is needed to protect himself. By doing so, however, he may well be provoking from all those he encounters the very behaviors he is trying to deflect. Showing suspicion, aggression and violence, he invites these very responses from others, and thus he is contributing directly to his lack of real security. What appears an effective short-term strategy, turns out to do considerable long-term and unforeseen damage.

If, on the other hand, a person stays for the most part in a peaceful intentional stance, she will regularly influence people in the direction of the wholesome. Even if she must rear up from time to time to face down the evil intentions of others, she is not distorting her peaceful character in the moments intervening between these incidents. While there might be some greater short-term risk, the long-term prospects of a wholesome outcome are much improved.

A useful analogy for this point of view can be found in the science of stress and its reduction. Humans are designed to generate intense but brief eruptions of fear (for flight) and aggression (for fight) in response to occasional threats from predators. It is natural for attachment (to survival) and aversion (to becoming someone’s lunch) to be evoked in times of danger. But it is equally natural for these to subside when the danger is past and for the mind and body to fall back into the more peaceful default mode of a nurturing, cooperative mammal.

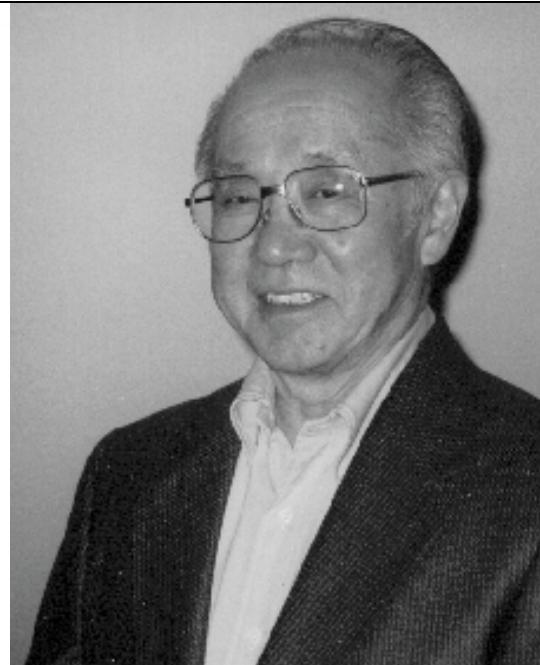
When unskillful decisions interfere with this cycle, such as the decision to place oneself on a sustained war footing, then the mind and body are subjected to significant amounts of long-term, low-grade damage. So if such a stance harms oneself internally by generating an unremitting stream of unhealthy karmic factors, and it harms oneself externally by provoking others into conflict with us, why would anyone with basic human wisdom deliberately choose to set himself (or his nation) at war?

—Andrew Olendzki

# The Working of Boundless Compassion

An Interview with  
Tai Unno

*Taitetsu Unno is Jill Ker Conway Professor Emeritus of Religion at Smith College in Northampton, MA. He retired recently after a distinguished academic career and is an ordained priest in Shin Buddhism, which he teaches in various settings throughout the United States. He is the author of Shin Buddhism: Bits of Rubble Turn Into Gold and River of Fire, River of Water.*



## HOW DID YOUR INTEREST IN BUDDHISM COME ABOUT?

I had the privilege of meeting Dr. D. T. Suzuki in San Francisco in 1951, and he really turned me on. He was then eighty years old, and he came to UC Berkeley to give a talk on Buddhism. He really got my attention because his personality and humanity was so palpable. He was not quite famous at that time, but his way of being was so different from other speakers in that kind of setting. I had the sense of being in the presence of someone who was living his life out of his teachings. He seemed to be an embodiment of a scholar-practitioner. I went to talk to Dr. Suzuki and asked him where I should go to study Buddhism. At that time the only places to study in America were Harvard and UC Berkeley. He suggested that I should go to Japan. That's how the spark of Buddhism started for me.

## AND WHEN DID YOU GET ORDAINED?

In 1956. Actually, I come from a long line of Shin priests. My father was the 12th in his lineage and under normal circumstances I would have been the 13th. But growing up in America, I rebelled against that kind of career and had not seriously considered a deep connection with Shin Buddhism. But after studying in Japan and getting my degree there, I rediscovered my roots and by 1956 it seemed quite normal to ordain.

## HOW DID YOUR ACADEMIC PURSUIT OF BUDDHISM AND YOUR INTEREST IN SHIN BUDDHISM IMPACT OR REINFORCE EACH OTHER?

At the time I went to study at Tokyo University, their approach was very European—philosophical and philological. The emphasis there was on studying Pali, Tibetan, Sanskrit, and so on. However, since my own inspiration was Suzuki's personality, I was more interested in following the model of the scholar-practitioner. To my surprise, I could find very few models like him. It was a frustrating time for me at Tokyo University, as I was interested in bringing religion and scholarship together. I even had a fleeting thought of entering a monastery.

About this time my father pointed out to me that within Shin Buddhism there is also the tradition of great scholarship. This was news to me, as I had thought Shin Buddhism to be a simple religion of faith and devotion. Even though I have been an academic all my life, I also have great interest in explaining Shin Buddhism and its religious philosophy to non-academic Westerners.

## CAN YOU TALK A BIT MORE ABOUT THE SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER MODEL WITHIN SHIN BUDDHISM?

During Shinran's time (1173-1263; the founder of Shin Buddhism), the Tendai

sect was the most dominant and also produced the largest number of scholars. But Tendai had also become a Church with its own problems. So during that time there was a saying that, "To become a monk you leave the secular world; to become a real monk you leave the Tendai order." It may be that in recent years, Shin Buddhism in Japan has also become the same kind of Church with perhaps similar problems. That situation has been one of my own motivations to articulate Shin Buddhism to Westerners who are lay people. Shin Buddhism itself never had a monastic order. It has always been an assembly of lay people.

## WAS THERE ANY DIFFICULTY IN BEING A PRIEST AND TEACHING AT SMITH COLLEGE?

No, not at all. Before I came to Smith College in 1971 I was teaching in the history department at a university, and it was not possible to talk about one's personal religious practice. But when I came to Smith College, I was told I could teach Buddhism any way I wanted. It was very different at Smith, and it was a perfect fit for me personally. Following my inspiration from D. T. Suzuki, I presented Buddhism to my students in a way that had meaning for me. And I think that approach was in turn meaningful for the students. At least my class on Buddhism drew many students.

Compassion is not just the province of monks and nuns, but it's for everyone, including those who have been left behind in society.

**AND NOW YOU HAVE A SANGHA OR COMMUNITY WHO MEETS WITH YOU ON A REGULAR BASIS. HOW DO WESTERNERS WHO STUDY SHIN BUDDHISM WITH YOU SEE THEMSELVES CULTURALLY?**

People came to practice with me (our sangha began in our living room) after having practiced Tibetan Buddhism or Zen or vipassana. I think one of the things they may have found appealing about Shin Buddhism is that it has always been lay-oriented. During Shinran's time, it started as an assembly of lower classes, peasants mostly, but these were working people with families. In the 13th century, both Shinran and Nichiren addressed the needs of common people and emphasized compassion as the primary virtue. Compassion is not just the province of monks and nuns, but it's for everyone, including those who have been left behind in society. This, I think, struck a deep chord among the general population of the time.

I have always felt confident that what motivates our small sangha is the Shin awakening to selfless compassion. It is something that people really appreciate even though we don't have a tradition of monastic hierarchy and rituals and so forth. I believe that a broader, deeper understanding of compassion can contribute to the evolution of American Buddhism.

**HOW IS A WESTERN PERSON TO UNDERSTAND THE CORE TEACHING OF SHIN BUDDHISM?**

There is a basic awareness of foolish beings (*bonbu*) at the core of Japanese Buddhist life, regardless of school, including Zen. And most of us are foolish beings because we do not easily awaken to the meaning of life's evanescence, filled with unexpected tragedies and culminating in death, even if we personally experience them. It is to the foolish beings that hearing the call of Amida or boundless compassion is addressed. We awaken to the preciousness of the here and now, and we are reborn into the world of boundless compassion. The paramount transformation in Shin Buddhism occurs when a foolish being attains Buddhahood by the wondrous working of boundless compassion.

**AND HOW DOES THE FOOLISH BEING GET IN TOUCH WITH THIS BOUNDLESS COMPASSION?**

It is done through the saying of *nembutsu*, NAMU-AMIDA-BUTSU. What does this mean? In brief, the *nembutsu* is the flowing call of the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life, coming from the fathomless center of life itself, as well as our response to that call without any hesitation or calculation. Thus, it is not a petitionary act, nor a mindless, mechanical repetition, nor a mantra with magical powers. Let me also add that when we use the term "saying the

name of Amida," it is not simply verbal but also somatic, involving one's whole being, a voicing coming from both the conscious and unconscious depths.

The calling of *nembutsu* awakens us to a liberating power that sanctifies all life, because it comes from beyond the small-minded self that is always engaged in calculating life only in terms of gain and loss, winning or losing. Sooner or later we will respond to this call, if we are ever to know a sense of security and well-being. If I were to translate *nembutsu* into English, it would be the "Name-that-calls," for it calls us to awaken to our fullest potential to becoming true, real, and sincere as human beings.

In Shin Buddhism, this transformation expresses the boundless compassion, non-judgmental and all-inclusive, that is the moving force in the Buddhist tradition. It is not, however, a simple, naïve optimism, for the starting point of Buddhism is a recognition of the universal fact of human suffering, born of both personal and collective karma. In fact, it is a realistic appraisal of life as it is, not merely on the surface of things but at its most profound depth. In this depth, abundant with the accumulated pain and sorrow of humanity, is also found the capacity of the human spirit to achieve its fullest potential, no matter the obstacles, through awakening to the

working of boundless compassion, deep within our life.

IN YOUR TEACHING YOU TALK ABOUT BEING SAVED BY AMIDA. HOW DOES THIS IDEA TRANSLATE INTO WESTERN CULTURE?

The word “save” is used in a very different sense in Shin Buddhism than it is in Judeo-Christian tradition. I avoid using this word as much as I can. I use the word *entrust* instead to avoid confusion. In my understanding, entrusting the Name of Amida is trusting life itself. Normally in the working of our ego self we don’t trust ourselves. We are shut out from life. So, this trust is not something created as a personal story; it is trusting life itself; it is trust that comes from the Buddha, a trust that I am complete just as I am.

We cannot awaken to Buddhahood so long as we have the calculation of what can we get out of this practice, and how soon. When that kind of calculation is given up, life and heart open up. We open up to the trust that we are supported. In English, we can call it *save*, but in Japanese it has the sense of being *supported*, no matter what happens.

YOU SPEAK OF COMPASSION AS THE CENTRAL CORE OF SHIN BUDDHISM. HOW DOES THIS HELP US LEARN TO LET GO?

Shinran talked about all of us being filled with 84,000 blind passions or *kilesas*. The other side of our blind passions is enlightenment, so there are 84,000 ways to get enlightened. Shin teaching was directed to farmers, fishermen, and householders, and for them it was a message of hope and optimism that they could also awaken to Buddhahood without the medium of priesthood. Their life was thus filled with 84,000 joys.

In our tradition, we also stress gratitude a lot. One Shin teacher has said, “To be grateful is to be alive.” Of course, within the tradition of Shin practice there can be tremendous struggle to come to this place of trusting Amida or boundless compassion.

We tend not to be aware of the interdependence of life. But this form of

self-reflection puts us back very directly into that awareness of interdependence. This is just the beginning of entering into a wider, deeper understanding of spirituality.

WHAT KIND OF CONTEXT DOES A SHIN PRACTITIONER BRING TO HER SELF-REFLECTION?

First, there are different cultural contexts to how a tradition is understood. In the Japanese tradition, rather than talk about the mind or the heart, they talk more about the body. There are many idiomatic expressions that convey a different sense of how a person is. For example, when someone is angry, we say, “his *hara* is standing up.” When a person is calm, we say, “his *hara* is doing *zazen*.” When an egocentric person is behaving selfishly, we say, “his *hara* is conniving.” (*Hara* is the centrum and lower abdomen).

Shin teaching was directed to farmers, fishermen, and householders, and for them it was a message of hope and optimism that they could also awaken to Buddhahood.

When a farmer goes to a Shin temple to listen to the teachings, he is reminded through stories and such expressions of his karmic limitations, no matter how much good he wants to do. These karmic limitations are illuminated in the light of compassion. It is not to judge the person, but to make him or her aware as a karmically limited human being. There is no systematic discipline for the person to follow except a self-understanding through the awakening to compassion.

The context that Shin Buddhism provides for the farmer is that of self-reflection and gratitude, an awareness of the interdependence of life. And it’s all very pragmatic and body-centered. There is not too much abstract thinking involved in these teachings. That way, a person’s constricted heart begins to open up.

When the heart opens up, he understands it as the light of Buddha’s compassion, not something that belongs to him. His life is illuminated by that light. In the midst of all his difficulties he continues to be grateful for life itself. He gets energized to deal with the difficulties of his life instead of getting down and saying to himself, “I am no good.”

HOW EASY IS IT FOR A WESTERNER TO SHARE THE SAME KIND OF VIEW THAT COMES NATURALLY TO A SHIN BUDDHIST IN JAPAN?

I must say here that in Japan Shin Buddhists have also lost their original context of the intermingling of culture and Shin teachings. The world there has also become very materialistic and goal-oriented. So we have to develop a new model of what it means to be religious.

I believe that this teaching of boundless compassion has to go deep, deep down into the consciousness, into body itself, where we unite with all beings, with all forms of life. That’s where Shin and Buddhist teachings have to work. You just cannot sit there and repeat, *Namu Amida Butsu* in a mechanical way. Its source has to be beyond mind, beyond words, tapping into life force itself.

In 13th century Japan, although Shin Buddhists were not doing the same type of meditation that monks in Zen or Shingon traditions were doing, lay people were trying to access the same deep imprinting on consciousness that would allow them to connect with the deeper currents of life. And these deeper currents have to do with the body. Japanese culture in the past has always stressed the wisdom of the body, like *hara* as the seat of being. Modern Japanese culture seems to have lost touch with that experience, even though it uses the language.

YOU HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT THE “PRIMAL VOW OF AMIDA BUDDHA.” IN WHAT SENSE DO YOU USE THIS PHRASE?

In the earlier translations of *Tannishō*, it is rendered as Original Vow, but I translate it as Primal Vow because deep within each one of us there is a primal wish to fulfill our life, our short life on

earth, to become the self truly. Primal means it is beyond the grasp of my consciousness; it's much deeper than that. To awaken to this primal wish means to let go of the needs of this ordinary self and to live life touched by boundless energy and infinite gratitude for the short human life.

I think at the core this approach is not different from the bodhisattva path of the Mahayana tradition or developing the factors of awakening in the Theravada. But Shin Buddhism does not itemize these qualities, just as Zen does not itemize them but strives to create those qualities in one's life and practice.

The striving and effort are there in Shin, but they are not systematic largely because the practice is not guided by any monastic supervision or support. In a certain way, this practice is like a Quaker meeting. It is understood that there are 84,000 paths, and we all end up in the same place if our hearts are transformed. The value of this approach is that you don't become doctrinaire.

#### HOW DO YOU SEE OTHER FORMS OF PURE LAND IN RELATION TO SHIN BUDDHISM?

I think it's correct to say that all later Buddhist traditions have some element of Pure Land Buddhism, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Tibetan or Korean traditions. As far as I know, in these traditions whenever they talk about Pure Land practice, it's related generally to monastic practice. There are many distinguishing characteristics in these traditions, but my impression is that they are part of a structured system, like formal meditation. Japanese Pure Land tradition abandoned all these formal practices and the emphasis is on awakening to the boundless power of life itself which is already there. Of course, the historical reason is that you could not tell fishermen and farmers to abandon their professions and become monks, but their life too was open to the possibilities of awakening in the midst of busy lives.

#### IN CHINESE PURE LAND THERE IS A CLEAR GOAL OF BEING REBORN INTO THE PURE

#### LAND OF AMITABHA, THE SO-CALLED WESTERN PARADISE. IS THERE A SIMILAR NOTION IN SHIN BUDDHISM?

No, not in the same way. An important part of Shinran's teaching, and one that distinguishes him from all other forms of Pure Land teaching, is that he spoke not of being reborn in the Pure Land but of *returning* from Pure Land. In his understanding, Pure Land is like a way station. You go there not to stay but to recharge your batteries, and then return as a fully enlightened being.

In this human life we have to live our limited karmic self, but returning from Pure Land as a fully enlightened person means we *become* boundless compassion. Becoming boundless compassion means we have exhausted our limited karmic self. In the life of the karmic self, *samsara* and *nirvana* are separate, but "returning from Pure Land" and living as

I believe that this teaching of boundless compassion has to go deep, deep down into the consciousness, into body itself, where we unite with all forms of life.

boundless compassion means that there is no separation between the two. This is part of the Buddhist worldview where time is not linear from A to Z, but is circular—going and returning are part of the same equation, religiously speaking.

#### IS YOUR PRESENTATION OF SHIN BUDDHISM TO WESTERNERS DIFFERENT THAN HOW IT IS UNDERSTOOD IN JAPAN?

Whenever Shin Buddhism was alive and vibrant in Japan, there were always teachers who expressed themselves in a language that everyone, not just the elite, could understand. Even farmers could express their awareness. I am trying to follow in those footsteps; though still very inadequately. So I am not doing anything new, except using Western vocabulary, stories, and so forth. I do not

think any of the well-trained teachers of Shin in Japan would have any problem with how I am presenting it here in America.

#### HOW ARE AMERICAN VIPASSANA PRACTITIONERS TO UNDERSTAND THE VARIOUS FORMS OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM IN AMERICA, INCLUDING THE NICHIREN-SHOSHU SCHOOL?

The Nichiren school bases its teachings on the Lotus Sutra and they follow their own version of the *bodhisattva* practice. It is quite different from the Pure Land stream, but it has its own particular and positive approach to life's problems.

Nichiren Shoshu people go out and help community members in times of crisis, and they perform a real service. One example might be paying off somebody's debts so they can start a new life. For these people there is a real sense of calling: "I am doing what Nichiren wants me to do as a human being." This is their understanding of *bodhisattva* action. All three paths ultimately teach compassion-in-action; otherwise, they are not Buddhist.

#### MIGHT THERE BE A BIT OF BUDDHIST EVANGELICALISM IN THIS SORT OF WORK? WHERE DOES SHIN BUDDHISM STAND IN THIS?

It is very clear that Shinran himself was not an evangelical. He and his community of immediate followers saw this new practice as a meaningful way of life and they were very sincere about it. Later on, when Shin teachings became organized and a Church grew around those teachings, it took on some of the characteristics of evangelism.

Shinran himself lived to be ninety years old and he spent the last thirty years of his life in writing and practice. He did not go out to convert anybody. Thus his life is symbolic of the basic stance that Shin Buddhists have taken. For those who follow the model set up by Shinran, it is this going deeper and deeper into themselves that they find most meaningful, and in doing so they connect with all beings at the deeper core of life.

## HOW DOES THIS PROCESS UNFOLD?

Shin Buddhism talks about three aspects of practice: sincere mind, joyful practice, and boundless compassion for all. Shinran redefined sincere mind by calling it the mind of the Buddha, not of ordinary human beings, because our minds are always clouded and polluted. The devotional practice of Shin Buddhism is to awaken that Buddha mind through the boundless compassion of Amida. Once that is fully realized there is no backsliding, because it is the joyful working of the Buddha rather than of the deluded mind.

If you talk about emptiness to the farmer, it will only confuse him; but if you talk about compassion, it is something he can readily understand.

*Nembutsu* (chanting the name) can be seen as the self-articulation of fundamental reality. Keep in mind that in Japan and in Shin Buddhism the words “fundamental reality” don’t have the same charge as in the English language. It is more of a synonym for various qualities of mind than an ontology. So we use words like reality, but in Buddhism the only reality is emptiness. When *shunyata* really works in my life and your life, it has a truly liberating power.

Throughout the history of Buddhism there are different approaches to this liberating power. In Shin Buddhism the sincere mind is not the human mind but the mind of compassion of the Buddha. When this compassion works in us, we attain a condition of not sliding backwards. It is not me that does this, because I am full of *kilesas* (blind passions). But rather than focus on this dark side or the lack, I focus on the Buddha and compassion. Then as a natural process I become more and more liberated.

Fundamental reality is emptiness; but if you talk about emptiness to the farmer, it will only confuse him. But if you talk about compassion, it is something he can readily understand. So we can say to him that this compassion is more fundamental than your normal way of thinking. He can get motivated to cultivate compassion in his life, and not get so hung up on *kilesas*.

YOU HAVE QUOTED SHINRAN AS SAYING, “SINCE IT IS DONE WITHOUT CALCULATION...”

There’s no doubt that when people start chanting *Namu Amida Butsu*, they have all kinds of calculation. But at some point they come to a two-fold realization: first, the realization of my unlimited karmic ignorance; second, awakening to boundless compassion that enfolds my karmic ignorance. The moment I realize the working of boundless compassion, I am freed.

That doesn’t mean I am liberated from karmic ignorance. In fact I become even more aware of my ignorance. But when we put trust in the working of the Name of Amida, things work out on their own. It happens when we let go of ego’s pushing to make things work out its own way.

IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM THERE IS A LOT OF EMPHASIS ON STRIVING TO GET RID OF THE *KILESAS*. THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE AS MUCH STRIVING IN SHIN BUDDHISM.

Shin Buddhists also talk about striving, but not in a systematic way. There is a saying from Shinran that *You must be willing to go through the cosmos raging with fire*. Unless you do that you will not reach an understanding.

Consider the case of the farmer who works very hard in clearing the soil, planting the crops, watering them, and so on. But he cannot program the forces of nature. He does not control rain or drought. Yet he has to continue, despite knowing he has no control over the forces of nature. He cannot sit back and say it’s all hopeless and I won’t work. There comes a point in the struggle where you have to let go. And the farmer has to

let go of his wish to have his crops be always protected. The same can be said of all of us, regardless of our profession.

The core understanding is that *samsara* and *nirvana* are not two different things. Amida is not outside, but is just the other side of *kilesas*; and they are both within us. We realize that so long as we have a body there will be some *kilesas* left, but by focusing on the Buddha mind and its working as boundless compassion we express the optimism that the working of the Buddha will eventually dispel it. Rather than focusing on limitations, I praise the working of the boundless compassion of Amida in my own life.

When we put trust in the working of the Name of Amida, things work out on their own.

In *nembutsu*, we hear the call of the Buddha, not Buddha the person but Buddha as life itself, Buddha as 84,000 *kilesas*, life as 84,000 Buddhas Amida. Our determination is to not let the 84,000 *kilesas* be an obstruction in our connecting with the 84,000 Amidas. We are taught that eventually each one of us becomes a Buddha through the practice of *nembutsu*. This is “84,000 joys abounding.”

ANY FINAL THOUGHTS FOR THE READERS OF THE INSIGHT JOURNAL?

It’s important that we don’t become doctrinaire, for all the various denominations are means to an end. We all need to appreciate our encounter with the path of Buddhadharma, because regardless of age, background or social status, as long as we are open to these teachings the path of liberation and freedom will open up. All the struggles along the 84,000 paths are really a struggle within yourself. The practice of Buddhadharma is to go deeper and deeper within, and open up to true and real life itself.

# In This World, Hate Never Yet Dispelled Hate

by Sarah Doering

*Based on a talk given at the IMS Forest Refuge in Barre, MA last winter.*

"Look how he abused me and beat me,  
How he threw me down and robbed me."  
Live with such thoughts and you live in hate...  
Abandon such thoughts and live in love.

In this world  
Hate never yet dispelled hate.  
Only love dispels hate.  
This is the law,  
Ancient and inexhaustible.  
*(Dhammapada 3-5)*

Hatred, indeed, has never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate. Hatred just leads to revenge, and revenge leads to more hate. A cycle of suffering is set in motion that can go on and on. Many places in the world today give sad evidence of this truth.

Hatred is an extreme form of anger. The Buddha's teachings take anger very seriously, because anger causes so much suffering.

Even when anger is not acted out and is apparently controlled, a person who is inwardly angry can instantly change the atmosphere of a room when he enters. He brings an invisible chill with him. Anyone nearby tightens up and draws back, becomes less spontaneous and more guarded. This happens without any conscious doing. It seems simply a response on the cellular level to the quality of energy that anger gives out.

When anger is not contained but erupts into violence, the damage is all too obvious. Some years ago, the Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda observed that "When this defilement of anger really gets strong, it has

no sense of good or evil, right or wrong, of husbands, wives, children. It can even drink human blood." This was his sad comment upon a long civil war that had torn Cambodia apart and had killed almost everyone he knew.

## HURTING ONESELF

What is often overlooked about the disastrous effects of anger, however, is the harm it does to oneself. The first person hurt is always the one who is angry. An angry mind is a suffering mind. An angry mind is agitated and tight. It is constricted and narrow. The quality of consciousness changes. Judgment and perspective vanish. All good sense disappears. One feels restless and driven. Nothing is satisfying. Sleep is difficult. The body is tense.

The sense of self is very large, and so is the sense of the other. One reason anger is so very painful is that it instantly creates such sharp separation between self and other. A line is drawn between the two that cannot be passed.

The first person hurt is always the one who is angry.

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Each angry moment deepens the imprint of anger in the mind stream.

But anger can also be pleasurable. There is a strong feeling of self righteousness. Self justifying thoughts take over. As the verses from the Dhammapada say, “Look how he abused me! Look how he threw me down!” There is a feeling of defiance and rectitude: “I am right!” But underlying the pleasure of those self justifying thoughts is the pain of a mind so tightly constricted that it is closed to human connection.

The results of anger are sobering. Anger acts as a poison in the mind. It generates unwholesome karma. Every intentional thought or word or deed has an angry after-effect. We sometimes think that when we do something, especially when no one else knows of it, the act just disappears. This notion is rather comforting if we’re uncertain about the goodness of what was done.

The act does apparently disappear. The thought has been thought. The word has been spoken. The deed has occurred and it’s gone. But that act has set in motion a chain of after-effects that linger on. Just as ripples are sent out in every direction when a stone is thrown into a pond, so each intentional act has resultants that move out in space and time and affect whatever they touch. We are stuck with what we’ve done, and with effects of what we have caused. We are, in other words, the heirs of our karma.

If the intention in the mind was wholesome, happiness will follow. But if the intention was unwholesome, that is another story. The results of an act are always of the same nature as the intention that brought them about. Just as when you plant an apple seed, the only kind of tree that will grow is an apple tree. And that tree will bear only one kind of fruit—an apple. An apple seed does not produce an orange or a peach.

So, likewise, if a seed of anger has been planted in the mind, suffering is sure to follow. For one day when conditions are right, that angry seed will ripen and bear angry fruit. And when the appropriate moment comes, the effects of anger will come back like a boomerang and strike us once again.

Anger is often likened to fire. It burns all its supports and then apparently goes out. But fire can sometimes lie latent, hidden, until circumstances come together and cause

it to erupt again.

I understood this analogy much better after a trip to Durango, Colorado a few summers ago. A big forest fire had recently burned out of control in the mountains above the town. I went up to see the blackened hillsides. There was no green anywhere, only charred trees and ash. It was a very sobering sight. But even more sobering was the comment of a forest ranger. He said that although there was no longer any sign of fire, fire was almost certainly smoldering somewhere underground among the roots, and even winters of heavy snow might not put it out. He said “We don’t know where or when it will reappear, so we have to be very watchful.” In the same way, when conditions are right, the after-effects of anger will reappear.

The law of karma also says something else that is sobering. It says that over time our personality and character are molded by what we think and say and do. Each angry moment deepens the imprint of anger in the mind stream. This means that each time we are angry, it is easier to become angry again. An angry reaction, repeated frequently, gradually becomes a habit. We begin to find less to like about our life situation and less to like about others, and we become increasingly irritable and negative. Not surprisingly, people begin to avoid us, and we feel isolated and lonely. Meanwhile unpleasant things keep happening, and we don’t understand that they are actually the results of our own doing.

Our personality, and our very lives, are shaped—and continue to be shaped—by the karmic choices we make. It is therefore so important to reflect on our own responsibility for the way our lives unfold. Our actions are the one thing that we truly possess. We inherit their results and reap whatever we sow.

#### GETTING FREE OF ANGER

Yet...we are not doomed to repeat the past. At any given moment the pattern can be broken. For when we are mindful, we see that every moment gives a choice. Shall I react in anger? Or shall I respond in kindness, with love?

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The more we practice, and the more we reflect upon our own lives and the lives of those around us, the more we begin to understand the profundity of the law of karma. We come to see why we should never respond to anger with anger. A Tibetan lama has remarked that to meet another person's anger with anger is like following a lunatic who jumps off a cliff. If it is crazy for him to do it, it is even crazier for me to follow!

In the quiet here, there is continuing opportunity to observe the mind and our ways of relating to the world. There is a chance to see how often resistance arises to what we don't like. Anger is a form of resistance to the present moment. When we don't like what is here, we tighten against it and try to get rid of it by pushing it away.

Anger has many different shades and takes many different forms. These include irritation, frustration, rage, hate, bitterness, sadness, cynicism, and impatience. Then there is judgment. Judging mind is a frequent one—judging oneself, judging others. And guilt, too, is a form of anger. It is anger at oneself.

All these different types of aversion can be called negative emotions. But negative here doesn't mean bad. A negative emotion is simply one that negates or denies. When anger says "I don't like this. I don't want it!" it is saying NO to life. For life at this moment is a particular way, and that way is being rejected.

Life keeps presenting us all the time with things we never would have chosen if there had been a choice. It can be a painful sitting, an upset stomach, a biting wind, bad news... The question, then, is how not to react with aversion, how not to be automatically angry or sad or afraid.

The entire practice that we are doing leads to freedom from anger and from every form of aversion. But tonight I would like to focus on two particular ways: the development of loving kindness, and the development of mindfulness. These two ways can be pursued simultaneously. Let's look at mindfulness first.

We need to observe our minds attentively. We want to catch anger, if we can, when it is small, just as it begins to unfold. If the very

first feeling of unpleasantness is noticed, it may disappear before it grows into irritation. Or, if it is already irritation, it may be noted and checked before it grows into anger. Or if it is already anger, if it is seen, it can be caught before it spills out into some act we will later regret—a cross note, sharp words, or a slammed door. Rage and hate don't just appear out of nowhere, full blown. They develop from a momentary unpleasant feeling that went unnoticed and rapidly escalated in intensity.

The point at which we become aware of anger depends upon the quality of attention. The earlier we tune in and know anger is present, the easier it is to control and abandon. But if we are lost in thought, lost in some story about ourselves, there is no contact with what actually is happening now.

I was once in a traffic jam. A long line of cars was motionless, stuck. I saw a man in a car in another lane, who was not only honking his horn but bumping and hitting the fender of the car in front of him, trying to get it out of the way. The man was red faced and shaking his fist at the other driver, as a policeman came to stop him. That man was so lost in anger, he didn't even realize that the driver in front of him was just as stuck as he was.

#### WORKING WITH DIFFICULTIES

Now what I am going to say about working with anger is true for any afflictive emotion, so if anger isn't your particular issue right now, and desire or fear or jealousy or something else is, please listen carefully, for these same words will apply.

If you are sitting, and suddenly wake up to the fact that you are angry, very angry—step out of the story that is going on in your mind. Let thinking go. Pause and be with the feeling of anger, uncomfortable as it may be. It may feel totally repellent, a confused, heavy, hot, burning mass. Every emotion has its own particular feel, and when it takes over, seems a solid, substantial entity that will go on forever.

In fact anger is not solid, but is made up of different components: thoughts, which are spinning out the story; a particular emotional tone; and numerous body sensations. All of

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The ease that comes from complete attention is beyond compare.

these, just like the anger itself, are transient. They arise and pass, arise and pass.

Try to let the thinking go. Drop the story that's going on in the mind: "He did this, she said that, it's not fair..." Those thoughts are both an expression of anger and also are feeding the anger. Let them go, and bring attention to the sensations in the body. Allow yourself to feel, fully feel, the emotion directly. Look to see what is going on. Is there heat, is there pressure, is there tightness, is there contraction? Where in the body are these sensations being experienced? Do they move? Do they change? What is your relation to them? Is there resistance to them? If there is resistance, stay with the resistance and feel it.

If thinking is so strong that it keeps pulling you back into the story, make a little mental note 'thinking,' 'thinking'. The mental note keeps mindfulness alive and is a thread of sanity. It reminds us of what actually is happening right now—which is, quite simply, that angry thoughts are arising in the mind.

When anger is strong and it is hard work to stay present, take some deep breaths, breathe into the anger, and then return to the body sensations as you can. Above all, be accepting of the fact that anger is here. Open to it. Allow it, with gentleness. Being upset and angry with anger only increases the anger and increases the pain.

If the emotion is too strong to sit with, do walking meditation. Walk fast. Bring mindfulness to walking. Or stop and rest in nature. Look at the fields, and the trees against the sky. Look at the birds and the little creatures around the feeder. But don't indulge thinking. Be mindful. For when we are truly mindful, there is no anger. Anger disappears. This is true for any negative emotion. When attention is whole hearted, negativity simply disappears.

#### JUST A SMALL LEAF...

Many years ago, I had an experience of this that turned my understanding of practice around. It was at a time when I was very sad. I felt as though the end of the world had come. Someone whom I dearly loved had gone away and wasn't likely to return.

Walking up the garden path to my front door, I absent mindedly picked a leaf from a bush. And then, for whatever reason, I paused and looked at the leaf in my hand. My attention was somehow caught by it, and I began to study it with care. I stood still, looking at the little leaf, at its veins, its delicate edges, its smoothness, its shininess, its deep, deep green. And suddenly I realized that the heavy black sadness that had been so weighing me down, was gone. My heart was completely light and at ease.

The contrast was so strong between being swallowed up in sadness, and the sudden release into lightness and ease that the thought arose: "Is this leaf magic?" I didn't understand at all what had happened. The change was so great, so total, that I assumed it had to be caused by something outside myself. And I carefully brought the leaf into the house. I didn't in any way realize that the change from misery to ease had come about simply because for a few moments my mind had been focused and fully attentive.

The next morning, I plucked another leaf to see if it had the same power, as though happiness rested in a leaf. Of course, it didn't work. I didn't understand until much later that when mindfulness is total, there is no sadness, there is no anger—for there is no thought.

It is thinking and indulging the cycle of thinking, letting it go on and on, that makes us miserable and keeps us miserable. When thinking is cut, the mental afflictions vanish. Dukkha is replaced by the happiness of an alert and quiet mind.

That moment with the leaf was a big teaching lesson for me. For from it, I came to see the extraordinary power of mindfulness—its power to heal. When attention is fully with something, anything, there is no room in the mind for sorrow or anger or any negative emotion at all. There is just attention attending. And the ease that comes from complete attention is beyond compare.

If it had been possible to transfer the kind of close attention that had been given the leaf to whatever I was doing, and sustain that attention, sadness would never have returned. But of course, it did. That moment of full presence was only a rest for my mind.

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It was an astonishing reprieve, but it did not, could not, end my pain. To do that, something else was needed.

The next time sadness arose, instead of searching for the magic cure in a leaf, as (to be honest) I continued to do for several days, I should have turned to the feeling of sorrow itself. I should have been present to it and allowed myself to feel it fully. Unless it is possible to be completely mindful all the time, which I was not able to be, the only way finally to resolve any afflictive emotion is to meet it head on, open to it, and bring it fully into consciousness. When it is completely known, it will dissipate and disappear. It isn't usually possible to do this straight away, of course. It can be too painful. So we have to respect our needs and go at an appropriate pace.

At the same time it is important to understand, when we are in an unpleasant situation that can't be changed, that the sooner resistance is abandoned, the sooner we'll be at ease. That is only common sense. Otherwise, we keep on struggling to live in a world that doesn't exist, a fantasy world of how we wanted things to be and they are not. We're out of tune with what is currently happening, and suffering is inevitable.

Letting go, surrendering to the reality of the present, is the only realistic thing to do. To accept a given situation doesn't mean you have to like it. It simply means that, like it or not, it is here.

#### A REMARKABLE LIFE

The life story of Maha Ghosananda, the Cambodian monk whom I mentioned earlier, beautifully illustrates everything I am trying to say. Ghosananda knew first hand the very worst that anger can do. Ghosananda experienced the horrific effects of anger, and out of despair determined to learn to love.

As a young monk, Ghosananda first studied the suttas [discourses]. When it was time for him to begin the practice of meditation, he was sent to a monastery in Thailand. It was in Thailand, in a place of safety, that he first heard about the outbreak of fighting in Cambodia. He learned that his parents and all his brothers and sisters had been murdered. He was told, over time, of

the death of many of his fellow monks and nuns. And of course, he said, he wept for so many losses. He wept for his country. He wept, he said, every day and could not stop weeping. But his teacher urged him to stop. "Don't weep," he was told, "Be mindful." That may sound unsympathetic, but it was good advice.

"Having mindfulness," his teacher said, "is like knowing when to open and when to close your windows and doors. Mindfulness tells us when is the appropriate time to do things... You can't stop the fighting. Instead, fight your impulses toward sorrow and anger. Be mindful. Prepare for the day when you can truly be useful to your country. Stop weeping, and be mindful!" (8)

Ghosananda said he sat for a long time and reflected upon the killings, and upon what his teacher had said. He realized that the dead were dead. They were in the past. Gone. All his family, all his friends, were gone. He thought about the future, and saw that it was totally unknown. He decided to do the only thing that he could do, which was to take care of the present just as well as he could. "The present is the mother of the future," he said. "Take care of the mother. Then the mother will take care of the children." So he went back to practice, back to his breath. For, as he said, "Breathing is not past or future. Breathing is now."

The weeping stopped. "There is no sorrow in the present moment," he explained. "How can there be? Sorrow and anger are about the past. Or they arise in fear of the future. But they are not in the present moment. They are not now."

For nine more years he went on with his practice in the Thai forest, secluded in a hut, and there he gained the clarity and stability of mind, the understanding and the love, that are the fruit of very deep meditation.

When the fighting was dying down, he made his way back to Cambodia. Millions of civilians had died from the bombings and from starvation and imprisonment and torture. It was a land of hate and fear and misery. Ghosananda went into a refugee camp near the border. It was jammed with people fleeing the opposing armies. Sewage flowed in open gutters. Food and water were

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To accept the unacceptable actually turns out to be a relief.  
It means there is no need to struggle any more...  
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scarce. People were desperate, not knowing what to do. He oversaw construction of a large makeshift temple made of bamboo.

Eyewitnesses say that thousands of refugees gathered together and wept as this single Buddhist monk in his saffron robes chanted the words "Hate never yet dispelled hate. Only love dispels hate. This is the law, ancient and inexhaustible." He went on to say, "now it is time for peace, for no more hate. Let there be no more violence..."

He went straight to work to help reestablish the broken society, rebuilding temples, leading peace marches, encouraging people to end their hostility, to abandon anger and live in peace. Almost overnight he became a public figure, and is now known throughout the world as a spokesman for nonviolence and reconciliation. He is sometimes called "the Gandhi of Cambodia."

To put down the past and accept its losses is painfully hard to do. But to cling to sadness and self pity and continue to grieve for what has been, or for what never can be, simply erodes strength. It takes away all creative energy for living.

The king of Cambodia was deeply depressed about the immense suffering in his country. Ghosananda was asked what advice he gave the king. Cambodia, of course, is (or was) a Buddhist country, and it was quite natural for the king to ask a monk for advice.

Ghosananda said: "We always remind the king to be in the present. He always thinks about the future, he always regrets the past, and then he suffers. If he stays in the present moment, he will be happy. Life is in the present moment. Breathing in, present moment. Breathing out, present moment. We cannot breathe in the past," he said. "We cannot breathe in the future. Only here and now can we breathe."

I like this story about the king because it is so simple. The advice that is given a king is the same advice that is given to you or to me. Be present, be mindful, and sadness and anger will disappear.

#### HEALING THE WOUNDS

To turn to the present and accept the unacceptable actually turns out to be a relief.

If you've ever done this, you know what I mean. It means there is no need to struggle any more. A burden lifts that we hadn't even known we were carrying. Things are the way they are. We accept them because they are a fact. It is the only realistic thing to do. And so we move on with life.

This takes time, of course. As Ghosananda said, "Wars of the heart always take longer to cool than the barrel of a gun...We must heal through love...And we must go slowly, step by step..." Perhaps acceptance can happen only after one has known the full misery of loss and disappointment and despair. But even so, healing isn't easy. For what is required is nothing less than a transformation of mind. Forgiveness is needed if hatred and aversion are to be let go and replaced by love. The past must be forgiven, life itself must be forgiven for being the way it is. And metta, or loving friendliness, must be roused.

It is necessary to develop metta for ourselves, metta for those around us, metta for our situation in life. How to develop a heart full of metta becomes the central question. The way to begin is to reflect and be clear that this is what you really want to do, put misery behind and be kind to yourself and kind to others. A clear intention that is frequently repeated sets the mind in the direction that we want to go and helps to keep us moving.

The Dalai Lama speaks of a phrase which he repeats every morning upon awakening. "May all my thoughts and words and deeds today bring no harm to anyone, but be of benefit to all." With time and repetition, that phrase begins to serve as an underground current in the mind, silently redirecting intention away from harming and toward the expression of love.

It is helpful also to reflect upon the disadvantages of anger, to reflect upon all the different reasons why we know that negative emotions cause harm. Reflection lifts their damaging effects into consciousness and strengthens determination to avoid any form of aversive expression.

To practice intensive metta meditation over a long period of time can be helpful, or to practice it for even an hour a day. Or

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you can begin each sitting with phrases of metta. If you are often angry with yourself, full of self-criticism and self-judgment, you could begin each sitting with the traditional phrases of metta sent just to yourself. This may seem a small thing to do, but if it is repeated faithfully, in time it will have a significant impact. In time there may come to be less self-judgment, less self-condemnation and more self-respect.

To feel metta for oneself is not only important, but is necessary if practice is to progress. And in turn practice heightens the feeling of metta. For with practice, trust and confidence in oneself begin to grow. And that growing confidence gives a sense of self-worth and appreciation, which enables one to turn more easily toward others with the same respect and appreciation.

#### MINDFULNESS AND METTA

The most important source of metta, and this may be a surprise to hear, is the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is closely allied with metta, and even has an aspect of metta within it. For to be mindful is to be completely open and receptive to whatever is present. A Chinese Zen saying likens mindfulness to a host who is opening his house to friends for a gathering. The host stands at the door, greeting each guest as they enter and saying goodbye to each guest as they leave, fully attentive to each in turn. There is no preference for one over another, no disliking one or another. There is only genuine interest and care for whoever comes or goes through the door.

Total attention is a very great gift. When you give someone your full attention, you are offering him or her your respect. To give unqualified attention to another is to accept that person totally and acknowledge their value. In such a moment of bare attention, a deep human bond is felt. The other person feels this sympathetic interest and is likely to respond.

Over time, the practice of mindfulness changes old ways of perceiving. For in a moment of mindfulness, memories and past conditioning fall away. Every moment of mindfulness is a moment of purity in which, for that instant, we see with new eyes the wonder and beauty of what is here.

This is true not only for living beings, but for inanimate objects as well. Krishnamurti, an Indian spiritual teacher, once said that if you pick up a stone from the ground, just any ordinary stone, and put it on a table in your living room and then look at that stone with great care every time you go in or out of the room, by the end of a month you will see the stone as sacred. The power of mindfulness takes us beyond the surface to the essence of what is.

As mindfulness becomes more constant and precise, someone with whom in the past we have been angry will come to be seen not as an enemy but as a being who is hurt and confused. (And if we know ourselves at all, we know that we too are often hurt and confused.) We come to understand that just as I am seeking happiness, that person too wants to be happy—but doesn't know how.

We must put ourselves in the other's place. As the American Indians used to say, we must walk a mile in that person's shoes, and then ask ourselves the question: "How would I respond from there." The honest answer might well be that we would do the very same thing. For the more we sit in silence and observe the mind, the more the unhappy discovery comes that we ourselves are capable of every kind of harming thought.

This does not mean that we should not stand up and oppose wrongdoing. But it does mean that we do so not with anger, but from a standpoint of metta as resolution of the issue is sought.

To learn to love one's enemy is not easy. As Ghosananda wrote, "I do not question that loving one's oppressors may be the most difficult attitude to achieve. But it is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it. Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions, but rather that we use love in all of our negotiations."

To do this requires great humility. For, as he says, "We (must) see ourselves in the other. What is the opponent but a being in ignorance, and we ourselves are also ignorant of many things...Only loving kindness and right mindfulness can set us free."

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All references to Maha Ghosananda are to be found in *The Future of Peace*, Chapter 6, by Scott A. Hunt, Harper Collins (2002).

# A COMPREHENSIVE MATRIX

These are the building blocks with which we construct our world. Every action which creates karma is represented on this chart. It is meant as an exhaustive categorization of all conditioned human experience. Try examining each of these options, one at a time, and look for examples of such activity in your own life and practice. You will find that such a matrix of experience provides a generic and de-personalized way of looking at what is taking place moment by moment, which supports the investigative aspects of insight meditation. As we begin to see more clearly the arising and passing away of both mental and physical events, and see them as an expression of underlying causal patterns rather than as the agency of a stable self, it becomes easier to penetrate the web of illusions that bind us.

On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one consciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
On one's own accord	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one consciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
As a response to something	one unconsciously	constructs a construction
sàmaü/pare	sampajàno/asampajàno	säikhàram abhisäikharoti
All action can be viewed as internally or externally generated. The former comes after some inner process of remembering, planning or deciding, and often feels as if it is a choice one makes for oneself. The latter arises as a response to some impinging stimulus. It can be automatic, as with an impulsive reaction, or it can set off a series of inner associations before the response is apparent.	The word <i>sampajano</i> is usually translated as “clear awareness” or “clear consciousness” and plays an important role in the instructions for insight meditation found in the Foundations of Mindfulness Discourse ( <i>Satipaththa Sutta M 10</i> ). So much of our decision-making is not done with this level of clarity, however, and in fact most of the choices one makes are likely to be unconscious.	This phrase lies at the heart of the human world-creation project. Intention has both an active component (the process of forging or making decisions) and a passive component (the results or dispositional artifact created by the process). Buddhist literature expresses this by the image of a potter, who both creatively forms the clay in the moment, and also winds up with a kiln full of pots.

# OF CONSTRUCTED EXPERIENCE

Anguttara Nikāya, 4:171

*"These states, bhikkhus, are afflicted by ignorance. But with the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance, there is no longer that body/speech/mind conditioned by which pleasure and pain arises in oneself. There is not longer a field, a basis, a sphere, or a cause, conditioned by which pleasure and pain arises in oneself." (A4:171)*

When ignorance acts as a causal influence on the formation of intentions, the craving that necessarily comes with it ensures that every action will involve grasping and will thus formulate karmic substrates that require further rebirth and suffering. When ignorance is replaced with wisdom, as with an arahant, or with moments of insight more generally, then this karmic mechanism is undermined and there occurs a moment of freedom from such conditioning.

of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of body	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of speech	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pleasure.
of mind	conditioned by which arises	inner pain.

kāya-/vacā-/mano-	yaü paccayà 'assa taü uppajjati	ajjhattaü sukhaü/dukkhaü
These are the three modes of activity through which karma or action is produced. Bodily acts are overt behaviors (such as pulling the trigger); verbal acts involve the formulation of intentions into words that are either spoken openly or to oneself; and mental acts include almost everything else in the inner life. That such non-evident activity is also productive of karma is an important Buddhist teaching.	All manifestations of experience involve the arising and falling of mental states, and these states are all conditioned or caused by the influence of other states. Such interdependence accounts for complexity without agency: phenomena arise, but there is no person making it happen so. Here the causal relation is being emphasized between the quality of intention and the consequent feeling tone of experience.	Pleasure and pain are the two primary modalities of the inner life. As the "end products" of the cognitive series, it is this feeling tone that so often drives our choices by pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. Buddhist practice helps reveal the extent to which this outcome is influenced by both our level of self-awareness and the skillfulness of our understanding and attitudes towards objects of experience.

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# Generating Spiritual Friendship:

## Reflections from a Gray Haired Mentor

Jean Esther

*Jean Esther has been practicing the Theravada tradition for the past 22 years. She is a psychotherapist in private practice in Northampton, MA and occasionally teaches meditation classes in the surrounding area*

At the suggestion of my hairdresser about two years ago, I decided to let my hair grow naturally: goodbye permanent brown, hello natural gray! Other than enjoying the occasional positive comment, I truthfully didn't think any more about it. Then one day across our lunch table in Northampton, a friend exclaimed: "Wow. You're brave!" Exercising the second factor of awakening [investigation] that night, I looked a little longer and closer in the mirror, still a bit perplexed by her comment. What did she mean that I was "brave"?

In the large circle of 'young' adults (ages 19 through 30) and about twelve 'older' adults at the first weekend retreat of the Mentoring Program at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, I sheepishly confess that I had several mind moments (coming and going of course) where my total existence felt like nothing more than GRAY HAIR! I felt much less alone when a fellow mentor (whose hairline I've watched recede over the last two decades) said, "Look at all their faces; they're all so young and beautiful."

Okay, is this really a story about hair? Or is it about two different generations coming together with a deeply shared commonality: a devotion to understanding what is true and living from a place of non-harm in our lives? Perhaps a little of both, but the latter is where we set our sails to the wind. Surely, many more people share this interest in dharma. This particular group has formed out of Michele McDonald's vision of extending a commitment of support to young adults in their spiritual practice. The Mentoring Program is a flowering from the Young Adults Retreat, a four-day retreat for teens ages 14-19 which has been occurring every year for the past fourteen years at IMS. Many of the young participants in this three year Mentoring Program have previously sat at IMS, while the rest have had considerable other experience with meditation practice in this country as well as in the East.

The mentors include many longstanding western vipassana teachers, as well as several long-term senior students of the Theravada tradition. This is the first program of its kind to take place here in Barre, and hopefully many more like-minded programs to follow. We will be working on a one-to-one basis with each "mentee" throughout the three-year period, and will hold at least one retreat each year as a group. There are five major components of the program, which are meant to support and nurture each participant's spiritual development: 1) daily practice; 2) dhamma study; 3) exploration of sila [morality]; 4) meditation retreat practice; and 5) interface with personal life issues.

How auspicious it was to have this two day retreat, which was held June 8-10 at BCBS, coincide with a two-month retreat given by Burmese master Sayadaw U Pandita at the newly constructed Forest Refuge next door. More than fifteen years ago, Sayadaw was the original inspiration for the Young Adult's Retreat, urging two of his senior students, Michele McDonald and Steve Smith, to start training programs for young people at IMS.

On Monday afternoon, Sayadaw came to give us a dharma talk. Here I sat with two of my primary teachers of the past twenty years (Joseph and Michele), listening to their renowned

teacher instructing young adults whom I have encouraged in their practice for many years. I was thus sitting among four generations of practitioners. This aroused incredible gratitude in me for the many people who, through their willingness to share the dharma, have passed on the teachings for two and a half centuries and have thus made this retreat possible.

When it's my turn to "pass on" what I've learned, all of a sudden the hindrances light up in neon! Aversion, desire, sloth, restlessness, and, my favorite, doubt! Pass on what? The more I practice, the less sure I am of knowing ANYTHING! Besides, developing mindfulness, attending to sila, deepening wisdom and compassion... isn't that a trillion billion lifetimes of work? (I think it's time for a piece of chocolate and a nap!)

That said, I'm not sure who's mentoring who here. As one mentor so aptly put it, "Who's helping who here? Who's learning from whom? It's all shaken up." It is kind of confusing. What remains definitely clear is that skin textures vary with age. What is also clear is the joy, awe, respect, and inspiration I feel in the presence of these young adults. Being around them, my heart rests. With people like this moving forward, the future doesn't look so bleak to me. And I say this in the midst of what feels like a rapid deterioration of our planetary human capacity to wisely and lovingly co-exist with each other.

According to U Pandita, the recipe for true happiness is to simply follow the traffic lights: Green means GO. Red means STOP. When you see green (wholesome thoughts, words, and acts), you GO. When you see red (unwholesome thoughts, words, and acts), you STOP. Following these instructions is understanding the laws of karma (cause and effect). Which choices lead us to happiness? Which choices lead us to unhappiness? These simple instructions are clearly not age-determined.

Neither, so it appears, is the leadership within this group. It's particular mark evolved early on: it is held by all of us. Its attributes include listening well and following what emerges. Good medicine for all of us, regardless of our personal tendencies towards extroversion or introversion. It can be a rich practice ground for looking at our habits in a group. The depth of sangha among the participants (old and young alike) is a very strong underscoring of the Buddha's commentary to Ananda that "spiritual friendship [kalyanamitta] is the whole of the holy life."

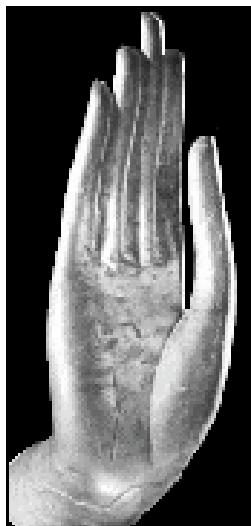
The Buddha also said that suffering is what motivates us to become free. I don't see any greater time than now to be motivated. U Pandita spoke of Americans as "having burning hearts in the middle of air-conditioned rooms." My heart is definitely burning. This seems observably so in the others around me as well. If, in this little group of people, I can offer a listening ear, a kind word or act, or a bit of self-restraint when that is of benefit, then perhaps, in my own small way, I can give something back of what has so preciously been given to me. It is an honor and a privilege to be part of this group. May its' goodness serve to benefit all beings everywhere.

With people  
like this  
moving  
forward,  
the future  
doesn't look  
so bleak to  
me.



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# Lessons from an Illness



Marilyn Judson

*Marilyn Judson has studied vipassana meditation with Shinzen Young for the past nine years, and with Thich Nhat Hanh for five years before that. She has a daily sitting meditation practice, meets weekly with her sangha for dharma discussion and sitting practice, and attends several vipassana retreats each year.*

I was lying in my hospital room and starting to feel desperate and afraid. I had a suction tube down my throat, an I.V. in my arm, and I hadn't eaten in three days. Twenty-four hours earlier, my husband had driven me to the hospital's emergency room after several days of intermittent vomiting and severe abdominal pain. An x-ray at that time revealed that I had an obstructed bowel and would require major surgery as soon as an operating room was available in the over-crowded hospital. In the meantime, I waited and I worried. Although morphine pain shots were keeping me relatively comfortable, the tube in my throat felt like a snake, I was desperate to eat, and I was impatient to have the surgery over with. I just wanted this nightmare to end.

So, what to do during the four days of waiting for an operating room? Fortunately, my situation put me in mind of my meditation teacher's story about his first significant meditation experience, which was in Japan in the early 1970's. Shinzen Young's admission to a community of Buddhist monks was conditional upon his spending 100 days in isolation and in silence in a simple hut in the middle of the mountains during the cold Japanese winter. He was to have no human contact other than a brief visit from a monk who brought him a meager meal each day. The hut was not heated, and he had to bathe in an outdoor shower in the mountain wind with freezing cold water that felt like razor blades cutting into his skin. After the second day, he realized that he would either be in abject misery for the next 98 days or would need to use his nascent meditation skills to transcend this painful and frightening experience. He chose the latter, and came down from that mountain a changed person.

I felt that I was in a less extreme, but similar position. I really felt that I was on the edge of "emotional freak-out" from the stress of the tube down my throat, the hunger pangs, and the waiting. Some very old patterns of fear and despair were knocking at my door and threatening to cause me to spiral down into a deep depression. I realized that I could either let myself fall into that black hole or I could find a way to use this experience to my advantage. It was crystal clear to me that I had only those two choices.

Fortunately, after 13 years of daily meditation practice and about five years of 12-step work, I had enough "tools" at my disposal that I was able to turn toward growth. This is not to say that the next four days of waiting for the surgery (plus another four days post-operative) were without periods of depression, anxiety, and tears. However, the majority of my experience was filled with an intentional, deliberate focus on whatever I could find that was positive in my environment. It was one of the few times when I consistently directed my focus in that direction, instead of toward the imperfections of my life and of the world in general. My situation was so clearly NOT perfect that I was, for once, able to let that impulse go. What an incredible gift.

So, how exactly did I achieve this shift? I called my Al-anon sponsor, who let me cry to her over the phone and then supported me in my making a list of everything about this illness for which I was grateful. So, I took pencil to paper and started to write down things as they occurred to me. The list included my husband who visited daily, brought me spiritual literature from home, and was totally "in my corner," as he has been so often during our 33 years together. My list also included friends, family, and neighbors who visited, sent cards, or telephoned, as well as a young nephew who spent two long afternoons playing Scrabble with me: a truly blessed distraction. It included living in a Western country where excellent medical care and pain management are available. It included the hospital's compassionate and professional nursing staff, who were able to laugh at a good joke, as well as to hold my hand when I needed to cry. In sum: it included the kinds of things that I often take for granted in my daily life.

How did I use my meditation practice? When I started to feel sad or despairing, I noticed where those feelings "registered" in my body: usually it was a tightening of my jaw or a tense

feeling in my chest or gut. Shinzen Young taught me this awareness of body sensations, which he claims is standard vipassana meditation technique. I also used awareness of my breath whenever my “Old Friend Fear” was threatening to dominate my consciousness. I especially felt a lot of trepidation when the G.I. tube was inserted through my nasal cavity into my throat, when the effects of the pain medication were wearing off, or when I was being stuck with a needle for a new I.V.

Instead of tensing up and gritting my teeth during these scary situations, I tried to relax into them by noticing my breath and scanning my body for sensations. I tried not to resist each experience, since years of giving myself to smaller discomforts and pain (while on the cushion and in daily life) had taught me to open up them as the best way to quickly move through them. I noticed how those sensations shifted in spatial location, in size, and in shape within each location. I noticed how the pain ebbed and flowed: that it was rarely static. This practice usually took the edge off the pain or fear and allowed awareness of a “bigger vessel” in which I was able to contain those frightening doses of pain and those big emotions. I was reminded of Shinzen’s many dharma talks on the link between impermanence (*anicca*) and suffering (*dukkha*). This does not imply that such an awareness will always make me happy, but simply that it will make me less inclined to see myself as a victim of my circumstances.

Did I do this all the time? Did I do it perfectly? Of course not: there were times when I felt the possibility of panic or deep despair, but I simply turned my acceptance toward that possibility, instead of resisting it. I tried to remember to breathe into the panic or the tears, and to also notice how and where those emotions showed up in my chest or my face or my gut. I used everything I could recall from vipassana meditation retreats that I have attended twice annually for the past 7 or 8 years. I also reminded myself that Shinzen had likened vipassana practice to an inoculation that prepares one for just such times of medical or emotional crisis. I felt incredibly fortunate to have this technique at my disposal.

An interesting blend of Al-anon technique and meditation occurred as I realized I needed to avoid obsessing on my illness. Thus, I limited the amount of time I was willing to spend discussing my symptoms and impending surgery with friends and family who visited or called. After a brief summary of my situation, I would shift the conversation to the other person or other subjects. I also put on make-up every morning, took frequent walks around the hospital corridors, learned everybody’s name, and chatted with the nursing staff as often as possible. Finally, I read a cheap detective novel as much as I was able to, given the morphine shots I required every three hours for pain management. In the evening my husband and I often watched a romantic comedy on the video player in my room: these were really very sweet times for us. Both my meditation experience and Al-anon principles allowed me to make a conscious effort to get outside of myself and to focus on others. This was very helpful in that it made my world bigger than just my hospital room, which could easily feel like a prison cell. It may also have been a small insight into the emptiness of self (*anatta* or the “No-Self,” in Shinzen’s parlance): that my reality may extend beyond my own skin, and that there may, indeed, be no separate “self” or entity that suffers with illness.

About two months have passed now since my moment of decision in the hospital room to turn away from despair and toward growth. I’m trying to continue to use that experience to remind myself that my life is, indeed, a gift and that to wring my hands about all its imperfections is a way of discounting this gift. I’m trying to continue to acknowledge my fear and anger when they are present, but not to let those emotions shape my attitude or drive my actions. I’m trying to continue to focus on my blessings and not always on what’s lacking. Of course, I don’t do this all the time: old habits are hard to change. But, my illness taught me that my habit of silent or verbal complaining is not as justified as I thought, and that I would be well-served to let it slowly be replaced by gratitude and acceptance. Both are greatly aided by my daily vipassana practice.

I tried to remember to breathe into the panic or the tears...I used everything I could recall from vipassana meditation retreats.

**Mindlight**

Loosening, burrowing  
Probing, nudging  
Reaching in the dark  
Looking for the Spark

Ever elusive and ever present  
A flameless fire sensed but not grasped

Loving  
Honoring  
Trusting  
Opening

Poised. Waiting.  
Until...the intangible glimmer.

Now! Here!  
Connection  
Illumination  
Alive and sparkling  
Radiant and invisible  
Mindlight.

Amen

*Dale E. Buonocore*

**Sunlight on Shovel**

It's damn cold out there.  
Subzero, they say.  
I rise from my corner of kitchen  
to fiddle with the heat, when  
my eye catches sight of sunlight  
beaming a single ray  
onto the front porch, onto the snow shovel,  
in fact. It is so clear  
about what it is doing,  
this shining,  
that even the green plastic  
sparkles.  
I don't know what else to say  
except that it doesn't take much,  
even in the wild of winter,  
to melt me.

*Martha Kay*

Half an hour's meditation each day is  
essential, except when you are busy.  
Then a full hour is needed.

— *St. Francis de Sales*

(Thanks to Cynthia Embree-Lavoie)

**Metta Practice**

Day 6, 6am

Not quite morning  
floats  
weightless  
like the fog  
at the window.  
Eight pools  
of yellow light,  
like fragrance,  
awaken  
an unformed memory.  
Sound is reduced  
to one bird;  
the rustle,  
now and then,  
of fabric;  
the creak,  
from time to time,  
of wood  
invisibly flexing;  
and the almost sound  
of a hundred people,  
each cloaked  
in our own tent  
of beautiful cloth  
Breathing.

Each behind closed eyes  
polishes  
a family  
of beloveds  
with phrases  
uttered  
ten thousand times  
by the mind  
by the heart,  
by the pores of our skin  
like the sound  
in the seashell  
or the constant sound  
of a distant ocean:  
the sound of breathing;  
not anybody's breathing;  
breath itself  
breathing love;  
not anybody's love;  
love itself.  
Utterly Love,  
Breathing.

*Kenith Simmons*

## Where's the Cook?

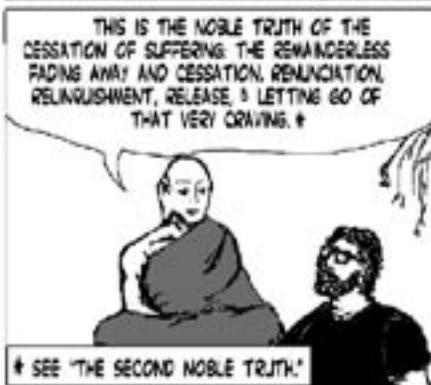
Where's the cook?  
Supper ate him, as we  
were getting the dishes.

Is that why these  
vegetables taste like  
they love each other?

Putting dishes away,  
everyone has generosity  
on the breath.

When Daigo has been  
in the kitchen,  
we eat poems.

*Shinzen*



## Nothing Lasts

A barrel-chested cloud  
Muscles its way above  
The grassy hill before me.  
Shimmering in the morning sunshine,  
A silver jet plane  
Marks its path with  
A clear white blaze  
Across the deep blue sky.  
Like a glowing meteor,  
The jet slices through  
The cloud's brawny chest  
And disappears from view  
For a slow count of ten.

It pops out of the  
Cloud's flexed bicep  
And draws a ruler-straight chalky line  
To prove its passage into open sky.  
Deflated, the cloud's bulk dissolves,  
Losing half its body weight.  
Nebulous steamy wisps  
Stream away in the wind.

As the jet plane disappears  
Over the far hills,  
Its trail blurs fuzzily  
Like the end of an exhalation,  
Erased by the breeze.  
The white line whispers away,  
As impermanent as the cloud.

*Ginger Clarkson*



# What is Mindfulness?

Christopher Germer, Ph.D.

*To live is so startling, it leaves but little room for other occupations...*

--Emily Dickinson

*This article is excerpted from the first chapter of a new book, Mindfulness and Psychotherapy. A collective effort of the Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy, the book is edited by Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegel and Paul R. Fulton, and will be published by Guilford Press in the spring of 2005.*

Psychotherapists are in the business of alleviating emotional suffering. Suffering arrives in innumerable guises: stress, anxiety, depression, behavior problems, interpersonal conflict, confusion, despair. It is the common denominator of all clinical diagnoses and is endemic to the human condition. Some of our suffering is existential, such as sickness, old age and dying. Some suffering has a more personal flavor. The cause of our individual difficulties may include past conditioning, present circumstances, genetic predisposition, or any number of interacting factors. Mindfulness, a deceptively simple way of relating to experience, has long been used to lessen the sting of life's difficulties, especially those that are seemingly self-imposed. In this volume we will illustrate the potential of mindfulness for enhancing psychotherapy.

People are clear about one thing when they enter therapy—they want to feel better. They often have a number of ideas about how to accomplish this goal, although therapy doesn't necessarily proceed as expected.

For example, a young woman with panic disorder—let's call her Lynn—might call a therapist, hoping to escape the emotional turmoil of her condition. Lynn may be seeking freedom from her anxiety, but as therapy progresses, Lynn actually discovers freedom in her anxiety. How does this occur? A strong therapeutic alliance may provide Lynn with courage and safety to begin to explore her panic more closely. Through self-monitoring, Lynn becomes aware of the sensations of anxiety in her body and the thoughts associated with them. She learns how to cope with panic by talking herself through it. When Lynn feels ready, she directly experiences the sensations of anxiety that trigger a panic attack and tests herself in a mall or on an airplane. This whole process requires that Lynn first turn towards the

anxiety. A compassionate bait and switch has occurred.

Therapists who work more in a more relational or psychodynamic model may observe a similar process. As connection deepens between the patient and the therapist, the conversation becomes more spontaneous and authentic, and the patient acquires the freedom to explore what is really troubling him or her in a more open, curious way. With the support of the relationship, the patient is gently exposed to what is going on inside. The patient discovers that he or she need not avoid experience to feel better.

We know that many seemingly dissimilar forms of psychotherapy work (Seligman, 1995). Is there an essential ingredient active across various modalities that can be isolated and refined? Mindfulness may prove to be that ingredient.

## MINDFULNESS: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO SUFFERING

Successful therapy changes the patient's relationship to his or her particular form of suffering. Obviously, if we are less upset by events in our lives our suffering will decrease. But how can we become less disturbed by unpleasant experiences? Life includes pain. Don't the body and mind instinctively react to painful experiences? Mindfulness is a skill that allows us to be less reactive to what is happening in the moment. It is a way of relating to all experience—positive, negative and neutral—such that our overall suffering is reduced and our sense of well-being increases.

To be mindful is to wake up, to recognize what is happening in the present moment. We are rarely mindful. We are usually caught up in distracting thoughts or in opinions about what is happening in the moment. This is mindlessness.

## ...And why is it important to therapists?

Examples of mindlessness are:

- Rushing through activities without being attentive to them.
- Breaking or spilling things because of carelessness, inattention, or thinking of something else.
- Failing to notice subtle feelings of physical tension or discomfort.
- Forgetting a person's name almost as soon as we've heard it.
- Finding ourselves preoccupied with the future or the past.
- Snacking without being aware of eating.

(Adapted from the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale Brown & Ryan, 2003)

Mindfulness, in contrast, focuses our attention on the task at hand. When we are mindful, our attention is not entangled in the past or future, and we are not judging or rejecting what is occurring at the moment. We are present. This kind of attention generates energy, clear-headedness and joy. Fortunately, it is a skill that can be cultivated by anyone.

When Gertrude Stein (1922/1993, p.187) wrote "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," she was bringing the reader back again and again to the simple rose. She was suggesting, perhaps, what a rose is not. It is not a romantic relationship that ended tragically four years ago, it is not an imperative to trim the hedges over the weekend—it is just a rose. Perceiving with this kind of "bare attention" is an example of mindfulness.

Most people in psychotherapy are preoccupied with past or future events. For example, people who are depressed often feel regret, sadness or guilt about the past and people who are anxious fear the future. Suffering seems to increase as we stray from the present moment. As our attention gets absorbed in mental activity and we begin

to daydream, unaware that we are indeed daydreaming, our daily lives can become a nightmare. Some of our patients feel as if they are stuck in a movie theatre, watching the same upsetting movie their whole lives, unable to leave. Mindfulness can help us to step out of our conditioning and see things freshly—to see the rose as it is.

### DEFINITIONS OF MINDFULNESS

The term mindfulness is an English translation of the Pali word sati. Pali was the language of Buddhist psychology 2500 years ago and mindfulness is the core teaching of this tradition. Sati connotes awareness, attention and remembering.

What is awareness? Brown and Ryan (2003) define awareness and attention under the umbrella of consciousness:

*Consciousness encompasses both awareness and attention. Awareness is the background "radar" of consciousness, continually monitoring the inner and outer environment. One may be aware of stimuli without them being at the center of attention. Attention is a process of focusing conscious awareness, providing heightened sensitivity to a limited range of experience (Westen, 1999). In actuality, awareness and attention are intertwined, such that attention continually pulls "figures" out of the "ground" of awareness, holding them focially for varying lengths of time (p.822).*

You are using both awareness and attention to read these words. A tea kettle whistling in the background may eventually command your attention when it gets loud enough, particularly if you would like a cup of tea. Similarly, we may drive a familiar route "on autopilot," vaguely aware of the road, but respond immediately if a child runs in front of us. Mindfulness is the opposite of being on autopilot; the opposite of day-

Mindfulness  
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**When therapists are working with intense emotions...it is essential that we maintain an open, compassionate, and accepting attitude.**

dreaming—it is paying attention to what is salient in the present moment.

Mindfulness also involves remembering, but not dwelling in memories. It involves remembering to reorient our attention and awareness to current experience in a whole-hearted, receptive manner. This requires the intention to disentangle from our reverie and fully experience the moment.

#### THERAPEUTIC MINDFULNESS

The word “mindfulness” can be used to describe a theoretical construct (mindfulness), a practice of cultivating mindfulness (such as meditation), or a psychological process (being mindful). A basic definition of mindfulness is “moment-by-moment awareness.” Other definitions include: “Keeping one’s consciousness alive to the present reality” (Hanh, 1976, p. 11); “The clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us at the successive moments of perception” (Nyanaponika Thera, 1972, p.5); attentional control (Teasdale, Segal & Williams, 1995); “Keeping one’s complete attention to the experience on a moment-to-moment basis” (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999, p.68); and, from a more Western psychological perspective, a cognitive process that employs creation of new categories, openness to new information, and awareness of more than one perspective (Langer, 1989). Ultimately, mindfulness cannot be fully captured with words because it is a subtle, non-verbal experience (Guanaratana, 2002).

When mindfulness is transported to the therapeutic arena, its definition often expands to include non-judgment: “the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In her summary of the mindfulness and psychotherapy literature, Baer (2003, p. 125) defines mindfulness as “the non-judgmental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise.” Non-judgment fosters mindfulness when we are dealing with difficult physical or emotional states. By not judging our experience, we are more likely to see it as it is.

#### MINDFULNESS AND ACCEPTANCE

“Acceptance” is an extension of non-

judgment. It adds a measure of kindness or friendliness. When therapists are working with intense emotions such as shame, anger, fear, or grief, it is essential that we maintain an open, compassionate, and accepting attitude. Empathy and positive regard are important relational aspects of successful therapy (Norcross, 2001, 2002) that overlap with acceptance. If either the therapist or the patient turns away from unpleasant experience with anxiety or revulsion, our mutual ability to understand the problem is likely to be compromised.

From the mindfulness perspective, acceptance refers to a willingness to let things be just as they are the moment we become aware of them—accepting pleasurable and painful experiences as they arise. Acceptance is not about endorsing maladaptive behavior. Rather, acceptance precedes behavior change. “Change is the brother of acceptance, but it is the younger brother” (Christensen & Jacobson, 2000, p. 11). Mindfulness-oriented clinicians see “radical acceptance” as part of therapy practice (Brach, 2003; Linehan, 1993b).

#### MINDFULNESS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

The short definition of mindfulness we will use in this volume is (1) awareness, (2) of present experience, (3) with acceptance. These three elements can be found in most discussions of mindfulness in both the psychotherapy and the Buddhist literature. (For detailed consideration of the construct of mindfulness within psychology, please see Bishop et al. (2004) and Brown and Ryan (2004) and Hayes and Feldman (2004). Although our definition has three distinct components, they are irreducibly intertwined in the experience of mindfulness.

The presence of one aspect of mindfulness does not automatically imply the presence of others. For example, awareness may be absorbed in the past, such as in blind rage about a perceived injustice. Awareness may also be present without acceptance, such as in disowned shame. Likewise, acceptance can exist without awareness, as in premature forgiveness; while present-centeredness without awareness may exist in a moment of intoxication. All components of mindfulness—awareness, present-centeredness, and acceptance—are required for a moment of full mindfulness. Therapists can use these

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three elements as a touchstone for identifying mindfulness in therapy.

The value of a stripped-down, operational definition of therapeutic mindfulness is twofold. First, if mindfulness indeed reveals itself to be a key ingredient of effective psychotherapy (Martin, 1997), clinicians will want a conceptual tool to guide their movements in the consultation room. Second, if outcome research continues to show mindfulness to be a promising treatment strategy (Baer, 2003), researchers will need a definition with clearly defined component parts to design new interventions.

#### MINDFULNESS AND LEVELS OF PRACTICE

Mindfulness has to be experienced to be known. People may practice mindfulness with varying degrees of intensity. At one other end of a continuum of practice is everyday mindfulness. Even in our often pressured and distracted daily lives, it is possible to have mindful moments. We can momentarily disengage from our activities by taking a long, conscious breath. After gathering our attention, we can ask ourselves, "What am I feeling right now?" "What am I doing right now?" "What is most compelling to my awareness right now?" This is mindfulness in daily life, and is how mindfulness commonly occurs in psychotherapy.

At the other end of the continuum we find monks, nuns and lay people who spend a considerable amount of time in meditation. When we have the opportunity to sit over sustained periods of time with closed eyes, in a silent place, and sharpen concentration on one thing (such as the breath), the mind becomes like a microscope and can detect minute mental activity. This is illustrated by the following meditation instruction:

Should an itching sensation be felt in any part of the body, keep the mind on that part and make a mental note itching... Should the itching continue and become too strong and you intend to rub the itching part, be sure to make a mental note intending. Slowly lift the hand, simultaneously noting the action of lifting, and touching when the hand touches the part that itches. Rub slowly in complete awareness of rubbing. When the itching sensation has disappeared and you intend to discontinue the rubbing, be mindful of making the usual mental note of intending. Slowly withdraw the hand, concurrently

making a mental note of the action, withdrawing. When the hand rests in its usual place touching the leg, touching (Sayadaw, 1971, pp. 5-6)

This level of precise and subtle awareness, in which we can even detect "intending," clearly requires an unusual level of dedication on the part of the practitioner. Remarkably, the instruction above is considered a "basic" instruction. Sayadaw writes that, at more advanced stages, "Some meditators perceive distinctly three phases: noticing an object, its ceasing, and the passing away of the consciousness that cognizes that ceasing—all in quick succession" (1971, p. 15).

Moments of mindfulness have certain common aspects regardless of where they lie on the practice continuum. The actual moment of awakening, of mindfulness, is the same for the experienced meditator as for the beginner practicing mindfulness in everyday life. The experience is simply more continuous for experienced meditators. Mindful moments are:

- Non-conceptual. Mindfulness is awareness without absorption in our thought processes.
- Present-centered. Mindfulness is always in the present moment. Thoughts about our experience are removed from the present moment.
- Non-judgmental. Awareness cannot occur freely if we would like our experience to be other than it is.
- Intentional. Mindfulness always includes an intention to direct attention somewhere. Returning attention to the present moment gives mindfulness continuity over time.
- Participant observation. Mindfulness is not detached witnessing. It is experiencing the mind and body more intimately.
- Non-verbal. The experience of mindfulness cannot be captured in words because awareness occurs before words arise in the mind.
- Exploratory. Mindful awareness is always investigating subtler levels of perception.
- Liberating. Every moment of mindful awareness provides freedom from conditioned suffering.

These qualities occur simultaneously in

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each moment of mindfulness. Mindfulness practice is a conscious attempt to return awareness more frequently to the present, with all the qualities of awareness listed above. Mindfulness *per se* is not unusual; continuity of mindfulness is rare indeed.

Everyday mindfulness allows us to develop insight into psychological functioning and to respond skillfully to new situations. Mindfulness in deep meditation provides insights into the nature of mind and the causes of suffering. These insights, such as awareness of how impermanent things really are, help us become less entangled in our ruminations and thereby foster more mindfulness.

#### PSYCHOTHERAPISTS AND MINDFULNESS

Clinicians are drawn to the subject of mindfulness and psychotherapy from a variety of directions: clinical, scientific, theoretical and personal. In addition, psychotherapy patients are increasingly seeking therapists who might understand their meditation practice. These developments are not surprising, given that Buddhist psychology and its core practice, mindfulness, have been growing in popular appeal in the West.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF MINDFULNESS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

The field of psychoanalysis has flirted with Buddhist psychology for some time. Freud exchanged letters with a friend in 1930 in which he admitted that Eastern philosophy was alien to him and perhaps “beyond the limits of [his] nature” (in Epstein, 1995, p. 2). That did not stop Freud from writing in Civilization and Its Discontents (1930/1961) that the “oceanic feeling” in meditation was an essentially regressive experience. Franz Alexander (1931) wrote a paper entitled “Buddhist Training as an Artificial Catatonia.” Other psychodynamic theorists were more complimentary, notably Carl Jung, who wrote a commentary on the Tibetan Book of the Dead in 1939 and had a lifelong curiosity about Eastern psychology. Later, Erich Fromm and Karen Horney dialogued with Zen scholar, D.T. Suzuki (Fromm, Suzuki, & DeMartino, 1960; Horney, 1945). In 1995, Mark Epstein wrote Thoughts without a Thinker, which triggered new interest in Buddhist psychology among psychodynamic clinicians.

Many practicing therapists took to Eastern philosophy or meditation as a way of improving their lives before beginning their professional careers. Some started to meditate in the late Sixties at a time when ideas of enlightenment followed the Beatles and other famous pilgrims back to the West from India. Former Harvard psychologist Ram Dass’ book, Be Here Now (1971), a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist ideas, sold over a million copies. Yoga, which is essentially mindfulness in movement (Boccio, 2004; Hartranft, 2003), also traveled West at the time. Some therapists began trying to connect their personal practice of meditation with their clinical work.

Studies on meditation flourished, including cardiologist Herbert Benson’s (1975) use of meditation to treat heart disease. Clinical psychology kept pace with numerous articles on meditation as an adjunct to psychotherapy or as psychotherapy itself (Smith, 1975). In 1977, the American Psychiatric Association called for an examination of the clinical effectiveness of meditation. The majority of the journal articles at the time studied concentration meditation, such as Transcendental Meditation and Benson’s program. In the last ten years, the preponderance of studies has switched to mindfulness meditation (Smith, 2004). Jon Kabat-Zinn established the Center for Mindfulness in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Medical School to treat chronic conditions for which physicians could offer no further help. Over 15,000 patients have completed this Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, not counting participants in over 250 MBSR programs around the world (Davidson & Kabat-Zinn, 2004).

An exciting, more recent area of integration for mindfulness and psychotherapy is in empirically-validated mindfulness-based interventions. The impetus seems to stem from the pioneering work of Kabat-Zinn’s (1990) MBSR program and Marsha Linehan’s Zen-inspired Dialectical-Behavioral Therapy (1993a). The publication by Teasdale et al in 2000 of an effective mindfulness-based treatment for chronic depression kindled further interest in mindfulness among clinical researchers. The potential of these mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches has ushered in a new wave of cognitive-behavioral treatments for familiar problems

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(Hayes, Follette, & Linehan, 2004; Hayes, Masuda, Bissett, Luoma, & Guerrero, 2004).

Where is the current interest in mindfulness heading? We may be witnessing the emergence of a more unified model of psychotherapy. We are likely to see more research that identifies mindfulness as a key element in treatment protocols, as a crucial ingredient in the therapy relationship, and as a technology for psychotherapists to cultivate personal therapeutic qualities and general well-being. Mindfulness might become a construct that draws clinical theory, research, and practice closer together and helps integrate the private and professional lives of therapists.

#### THERAPIST WELL-BEING

Although mindfulness appears to enhance general well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Reibel et al., 2001; Rosenzweig, 2003), therapists may be drawn to mindfulness for the simple reason that they would like to enjoy their work more fully. Psychotherapists choose to witness and share human conflict and despair many of their waking hours. Sometimes we are asked by a sympathetic patient, "How do you do it?" What do we do when a clinical situation appears impossible to handle? How do we stay calm and think clearly?

Doing psychotherapy is an opportunity to practice mindfulness in everyday life. The therapy office can be like a meditation room in which we invite our moment-to-moment experience to become known to us, openly and wholeheartedly. As the therapist learns to identify and disentangle from his or her own conditioned patterns of thought and feeling that arise in the therapy relationship, the patient may discover the same emotional freedom. The reverse is also true; we can be moved and inspired by our patients' capacity for mindfulness under especially trying circumstances.

Practicing clinicians are reminded regularly about the importance of the therapy relationship in treatment outcome (Crits-Christoph et al., 1991; Luborsky et al., 1986, 2002; Wampold, 2001). Clinicians also struggle with "transfer of technology"—making a bridge between treatment protocols developed in our universities and their application in the field. When focused primarily on implementing an empirically-

derived protocol, to the exclusion of a vital, interesting and supportive therapy relationship, therapists and their patients can both lose interest in the work. In the coming years, mindfulness practice may prove to be a tangible means for building empirically-supported relationship skills. This may help return our focus to the therapeutic connection, since there is something we can do to improve it. How we plan interventions may even be guided by a common therapeutic principle—the simple mechanism of mindfulness.

#### DOES MINDFULNESS MATTER TO THERAPISTS?

It is difficult to predict just what the impact of mindfulness on our profession will be. Padmasambhava, an eighth-century Tibetan teacher, said that "when the iron bird flies, the dharma [Buddhist teachings] will come to the West" (in Henley, 1994, p. 51). Although it is now over one hundred years since Buddhist psychology made it to our shores (Fields, 1992), it is only fairly recently that the ideas have captured the imagination of the clinical and research communities in psychology. The grand tradition of contemplative psychology in the East and the powerful scientific model of the West are finally meeting.

Scientifically, what we know is preliminary, but promising. Clinicians are on the vanguard of exploration, and even marginal success in the consultation room can be an important beginning (Linehan, 2000). We have many more questions than answers: we need to determine which mindfulness-based interventions work, and for whom. We should explore the impact of a meditating therapist on therapy outcome. We may wish to understand better the cognitive, biochemical, neurological, emotional, and behavioral factors that contribute to mindfulness. It may also be fruitful to investigate the outer reaches of mindfulness—what human beings are capable of in terms of attentional control and emotional regulation, and how this translates into the way we live our lives.

To have psychological techniques at our disposal, drawn from a 2500-year-old tradition, which appear to change the brain, shape our behavior for the better, and offer intuitive insights about how to live life more fully, is an opportunity that may be difficult for psychotherapists to ignore. Only time will tell what we make of it.

The grand tradition of contemplative psychology in the East and the powerful scientific model of the West are finally meeting.



**L**ike a retreat center, but not a retreat center. All of our courses include some meditation, and some are based upon extensive periods of silent sitting and walking meditation. Yet even our silent retreats involve some degree of reading primary Buddhist texts and discussion of their meaning among students and teachers.

**L**ike a college, but not a college. Much of our program involves reading, lecture and discussion, and credit is often available for undergraduates of other colleges or for professional continuing education (CEU). However, we also place great value on the practice of meditation as an important tool for Buddhist Studies, for investigating experience, and for understanding the dhamma.



**L**ike a monastery, but not a monastery. BCBS is rooted in a deep respect for the classical Buddhist tradition, including all three vehicles, while at the same time valuing the critical spirit and the give and take of rigorous investigation. Our programs are primarily directed towards laypeople, who may be studying the Buddhist tradition in a secular context and as householders committed to a full range of community responsibilities and duties.



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Oct 29-31	(Weekend)	<i>Chip Hartranft &amp; Andrew Olendzki</i>	Patanjali & Buddha: Awakening to The Yoga Sutras
Nov 6	(Saturday)	<i>Mu Soeng</i>	Heart Sutra: Form as Emptiness, Emptiness as Form
Nov 7	(Sunday 1-5 pm)	<i>Sharon Salzberg</i>	The Power of a Loving Heart: Metta Meditation
Nov 19-21	(Weekend)	<i>Christina Feldman</i>	Fear, Contraction and Release
Nov 28-Dec 3	(5 days)	<i>Andrew Olendzki. et. al.</i>	Essentials of Buddhist Psychology
Dec 4-11	(7 days)	<i>Andrew Olendzki &amp; Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia</i>	Bhavana Program: Contentment
Jan 7-9	(Weekend)	<i>Andrew Olendzki &amp; Rajesh Kasturirangan</i>	Cognitive Science & The Buddhist Understanding of Mind
Jan 14-17	(3 days)	<i>Bill &amp; Susan Morgan &amp; Ron Siegel</i>	Meditation for Psychotherapists
Jan 28-30	(Weekend)	<i>Christopher Queen</i>	Mindfulness & Social Change: Compassion & Service
Feb 4-6	(Weekend)	<i>Ajahn Thanissaro</i>	The Riddle of Desire
Feb 12-19	(7 days)	<i>Andrew Olendzki &amp; Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia</i>	Bhavana Program: The Three Characteristics
Feb 25-27	(Weekend)	<i>Rev. Issho Fujita</i>	Inquiry Into Zazen: Dogen's Extensive Record
Mar 6-11	(5 days)	<i>Paul Fulton, Trudy Goodman et.al.</i>	Mindfulness Meditation and its Clinical Applications
Mar 18-20	(Weekend)	<i>Jason Siff</i>	Understanding Meditation and the Meditative Process
Mar 24-27	(3 days)	<i>Gregory Kramer</i>	Insight Dialogue: Suffering and Freedom
Apr 1-10	(9 days)	<i>Leigh Brasington</i>	Mindfulness and Meditative Absorptions
Apr 15-17	(Weekend)	<i>Daeja Napier</i>	Patience: Emptying the Ocean With a Teacup
Apr 22-24	(Weekend)	<i>Mu Soeng</i>	The Great Way is Not Difficult: Hsin Hsin Ming
Apr 29-May 1	(Weekend)	<i>Sensei Pat Enkyo O'Hara</i>	Being-Time: Dogen's Uji Chapter
May 7-14	(7 days)	<i>Andrew Olendzki &amp; Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia</i>	Bhavana Program: Dependent Origination
May 22-27	(5 days)	<i>Andrew Olendzki et. al.</i>	Essentials of Buddhist Psychology
Jun 19-24	(5 days)	<i>Mu Soeng</i>	Emptiness: The Still Point of the Turning Wheel
Jul 8-10	(Weekend)	<i>Mu Soeng</i>	Buddhist Models of Enlightenment
Jul 15-17	(Weekend)	<i>Taitetsu Unno and Mark Unno</i>	Shin Buddhism
Aug 13-20	(7 days)	<i>Charles Genoud</i>	Bhavana Program: Vimalakirti Sutra



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PALI POETRY

## The Steadfast Family Man

*Anguttara Nikaya 5:40 and 3:48*

yathà pi pabbato selo  
araññasmī brahàvane  
taü rukkhaü upanissàya  
vaóóhanti te vanaspati

tath' eva sālasampannaü  
saddhaü kulapatim idha  
upanissàya vaóóhanti  
puttadàrà ca bandhavà  
amaccà ñàtisaighà ca  
ye c'assa anujāvino

Just as a mountain, made of stone,  
In the wild forest wilderness,  
Beneath whose shelter safely grows  
A mighty grove of forest trees,

So also, here's a family head,  
Faithful, established in virtue,  
Beneath whose shelter safely grow  
Wife and children and relatives,  
Companions and a host of kin,  
And all those who share life with him.

Most Buddhists have always been and continue to be laypersons and householders. These verses from the Numerical Collection of discourses paint a picture of a householder who is both refuge and support for an entire family unit or of a community. Of course these days such a person might just as soon be a woman as a man, or might even be an organization or a group. In either case it is the shelter provided by faith and virtue that enables the family to flourish. Its members are protected from the unwholesomeness of the world like a grove of trees is sheltered by the mountain from harsh winter winds.

Faith, or confidence in the truth of the teachings, allows access to the nurture and guidance of the Buddha's wisdom, while virtue is both a foundation upon which a life of practice can be built and a shield against the potentially dire consequences of immoral activities. As the Buddha has often suggested, one's true safety only comes from a network of relationships that have been carefully and respectfully cultivated. And as he has further said and demonstrated, a life of virtue can serve a much larger good than merely one's own when it is shared with one's companions on the path.

--A. Olendzki