

5-8月 | may - aug

awaken 普觉

to Compassion and Wisdom on the journey of life



That Unsettling Feeling

Effects of COVID-19 and how to deal with them

In this issue, we learn to tame the monkey mind, make friends with fear and cope with threats and anxiety for greater empowerment

感同身受就能放下执著

学习弥勒菩萨精神
幸福在平淡中活出精彩

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Vegetarianism, Buddhism and Good Health

In today's environment, our immune system is key to dealing with all forms of toxins and viruses. Going meatless and being a vegetarian, even for just one meal a day, can be most beneficial.

Studies have shown that plant-based diets may help to reduce the risks of heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity and other chronic conditions. A well-planned vegetarian diet can be healthful for people at all stages of life. Plant-based foods are also more environmentally sustainable, causing less damage to our environment, than animal-based foods.

Besides obvious health benefits that are backed by science, taking up a meat-free, plant-based diet with pure intentions can also help a person in his or her own spiritual cultivation.

The Buddha advocates great compassion, love and wisdom

in his teachings. Through his perfect wisdom, he saw that all sentient beings in the universe exist interdependently. All lives are intimately intertwined and connected. Therefore, the lives of humans, animals and nature are also inseparable and deeply interconnected. We can clearly see this through the recent virus pandemic that affected every being globally in one way or another.

Seen as the compassionate teacher and protector of all sentient beings, the Buddha teaches us to practise loving-kindness, to safeguard all lives, and not to harm any being in any way. He teaches those who are keen to listen and learn from him the ways to awakening; to refrain from committing any act with a malicious intent to harm or hurt others, to perfectly practise virtue and to purify the mind.

What we send out and project will be reflected back to us. If we hold a negative thought out of greed, anger or delusion, a seed has been planted. And all actions, big or small, will come back to us. We may not see the consequences now, but once the conditions are ripe, the seeds will ripen and sprout. It is therefore important to contemplate and meditate on the workings of karma and cultivate one's mind with the noble and expansive quality of bodhicitta.

May the world and all sentient beings have happiness and be free from suffering. ☺

Sik Kwang Sheng (Ven)
Abbot, Kong Meng San
Phor Kark See Monastery

Editor: The benefits of a vegetarian diet is personally attested by a volunteer, turn to page 40 to read her story. Also flip to pages 62 to 65 for tasty vegetarian foods and healthful recipes.

2020 has so far shrouded the world in unprecedented changes. The coronavirus outbreak which became a worldwide pandemic, not only brought out the worst but also the best in humanity (page 57). Medical personnel stepped up to the call of duty and selflessly gave their best to help the ill, with some sacrificing their lives in the course of helping the sick (page 69). Others rallied to reach out to the elderly, poor and destitute who desperately needed help (page 48), while some shared useful information and knowledge that could help humankind battle the virus, or keep a positive state of mind.

Even as we witness untold fear (page 53) and panic in the world, it is heart-warming to also observe unimaginable human solidarity, unity, compassion and warmth shining through the dark clouds of uncertainty.

The pandemic reminds us once again we should cherish and appreciate, and not take what we have—peace, family and good health—for granted (page 60).

We should always bear in mind the teaching on impermanence emphasised by the Buddha which is so aptly put across in this poem titled *Dhammavadaka*, "Remember always that you are just a visitor here, a traveller passing through. Your stay is but short and the moment of your departure unknown (page 40)."

Death can come knocking at any time, for that is the natural

A time of awakening and compassion

outcome and reality of having a physical existence. The real value of our human life is whether we are awakened to the true purpose and nature of our existence, and to use our short stay on planet Earth in a meaningful way that will fuel our spiritual growth.

Typically, we identify with our thoughts, feelings and beliefs (page 41). People stand by what they believe—they will even kill and die for their beliefs. Although we are not our monkey mind, our fears or anxiety (pages 54 & 56), thoughts, beliefs and feelings influence how we see and react to external situations (page 50).

The ability to step back and observe our thoughts and feelings as neither "me" nor "mine", mastering our mind and staying grounded in the present is vital for our spiritual development and happiness. We do this by tuning into our heart where wisdom, love and compassion reside, feeling deeply what matters most to us, opening our hearts to the vastness of space and staying centred in loving awareness, equanimity and steadiness (page 58).

If you need more resources on dealing with the monkey mind and fear, turn to pages 70 and 71. Also flip to the back and check out some useful mindfulness exercises for the pandemic by Ajahn Jayasaro.

This pandemic too shall pass, and we will emerge stronger from this collective experience!

Meanwhile, let us practise compassion for all to tide through this together by protecting each other, especially the elderly and vulnerable. Stay socially responsible by staying at home. If we do need to go out for essential services, do practise social distancing and wear a mask at all times.

May all beings be safe, protected and well in body and mind. ☺

Esther Thien

Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien



Learning to deal with the issues of death and ageing through the "Life Story" Workshop

Singapore – Ordinary lives can also have memorable stories to tell. The "Life Story" workshop is one of the programmes organised for seniors by the community development department of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery. Through this programme, the elderly can reminisce about and contemplate their decades of life on earth and record significant and memorable life experiences in their book.

Spanning 10 weeks, participants create a story book of their own unique life journeys through illustrations, text and images. Through this creative process, participants achieve greater self-awareness and a better understanding of themselves, thereby increasing their self-confidence. It also fosters closer family relationships and stronger friendships with Buddhist friends, expanding their social circles. At the same time, it allows them to deal with the issues of ageing with a positive attitude. Participants learn how to face adversity in life, accept it, deal with it, and let go of it.

A total of 100 participants from diverse backgrounds, from blue-collar workers to professionals and senior citizens, have joined the "Life Story" workshop. With guidance from Ye Jinghui and the assistance of the volunteer team, many participants, including illiterate ones, have overcome psychological obstacles, to create books that chart their own life stories.

Alice Wee, is one such participant. Aged 67, she is greatly contented. She feels she has led a blessed and full life. She has heard of many accounts of those in their 70s and 80s who had gone through numerous hardships in their lives. She strongly encourages seniors to attend the "Life Story" workshop. "Expressing the difficulties one went through in life can bring closure and healing in the process," she said. She mentioned a friend who became a much happier person after participating in the workshop. "She obtained relief and release through

creating her own book expressing the suffering in her life."

For the first page of her book, Alice put up a poem titled *Dhammavadaka* composed by Ven Dhammika that resonated deeply with her: "Remember always that you are just a visitor here, a traveller passing through. Your stay is but short and the moment of your departure unknown."

She is grateful to be blessed with good loving Buddhist parents; to have enjoyed a good education; a loving husband who served the nation as an engineer building roads, bridges, airports and MRT; and a filial, caring and compassionate daughter. She also counted her blessings to have Lim Chwee Chian as her great grandfather who planted many seeds of virtue with his philanthropic work in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As the fifth child in her family, she was brought up to be an independent lady. She had a very rewarding career as a private banker for 25 years, which offered her the chance to travel to many countries, all-expenses paid, and to live a luxurious life of wellness. When she was 46, she was diagnosed with leukaemia and given six months to live. Being a positive person by nature, she accepted it with grace. She chose to decline surgery and told herself to enjoy her remaining time doing good deeds and to cultivate spiritually. She practised chanting, meditation and learned balloon sculpturing during this period. She wanted to bring cheer to the world before she left and to raise funds for charity. She also did cancer counselling whenever the opportunity presented itself. Within two months, her cancer went into remission. She lives to this day without surgical treatment simply by being positive, joyful and letting go of what she cannot control.

Looking back today, she said her cancer was a blessing in disguise. Her whole attitude and perspective about life has changed. "Life is short and unpredictable. Everything is impermanent and doesn't really matter. You will continue to suffer if you have an emotional reaction to everything that happens or is said

to you. Opinions don't define your reality. With wisdom, you realise the non-dual nature of life; that we move from life to life. So, I asked myself what the purpose of my existence is," she shared. It's better to spend one's time and energy positively, to live in the present moment, rather than being drenched in worry. "Each morning, I thank Lord Buddha for blessing me with another beautiful day, to be alive so that I can emit a positive light to touch the lives and hearts of others and put a smile on their faces." In her book, Alice recorded numerous instances where her warmth and loving care had touched the lives of others, leading them out of depression, and bringing gratitude, joy and happiness to others. In one case, her own sharing and advice of going vegetarian and to stop worrying actually helped a fellow cancer patient, an acquaintance, who was sent home to die to extend her life. "More than 10 years later, when I met her at Singapore General Hospital, I could not recognise her but she remembered vividly how I saved her life and was very grateful. She is still a vegetarian to this day." With the gift of understanding animals, she has taught Dharma to a rabbit and helped a bird friend who visited her twice a day for three years take refuge in the Triple Gem.

Her motto in life is to always leave people better than you found them, to be that person who makes everybody feel like somebody. Hug the hurt, kiss the broken, befriend the lost and love the lonely. "Meditate and go inwards whenever you can. Learn to observe and let go regardless of what happens to you, good or bad."

In addition, Alice shared the wisdom she has learnt from her own life journey, "True power is restraint. Never speak from a place of hate, jealousy, anger or insecurity. Breathe and allow things to pass; to turn the negative into positive. It is better to light a candle than to complain about the darkness. A negative mind will never give you a positive life, so don't let anyone steal your joy and always be thankful for what you have. Forget the bad, focus on the good. Everyone's journey is different. Love the people who treat you right. Falling down is part of life. Getting back up is living." ☺



Taming *the* Monkey Mind

In these times of uncertainty, Jetsuma Tenzin Palmo gives a timely teaching on taming the wild and unruly mind.

All phenomena are preceded by the mind

The opening verses of the *Dhammapada* said that all dhammas, all phenomena, are preceded by the mind. The mind is chief. Everything depends on our minds. So in Buddhism, the primary quest is to know our own mind. No matter where we live, what we can never leave behind, even in our dreams, is our own mind. Yet how much attention do we give to purifying our mind?

In Buddhism, when we talk about the mind, it means the heart-mind, which is a much deeper level of our essential consciousness, or essential awareness than the mechanism of merely our conceptual thinking mind, or intellectual thinking. In Sanskrit, it's called *citta*; in Chinese it's *xin*.

There are many levels of consciousness beyond the surface consciousness of our thinking. If we think of the mind like an ocean, then we could say that our ordinary conceptual thinking mind, which is where we normally operate from, is like the waves on the surface of the ocean, with our emotions as the undercurrents. We do not normally know anything about the depths of that ocean, the depths of our consciousness, because we are living on the surface of awareness.

More than 2,500 years ago, the Buddha said that the average mind is a monkey mind. An ordinary monkey in the wild is very active. It is always jumping from branch to branch, picking the first fruit, taking a bite and then throwing it down before moving on to the next fruit. Most monkeys spend their time jumping around, fighting





one another etc. They are mostly very restless, always agitated and never at peace. The Buddha also said that the average mind is like a drunken elephant that is very, very destructive and out of control. So, you see, all that action isn't just on television. It's all going on in our own minds. Thus, if we want genuine happiness and peace, we have to tame this wild monkey mind.

The Buddha taught us how we can tame, train, transform and eventually transcend the monkey mind. He taught us techniques on how we can be more calm, patient, kind and loving.

Taming the monkey mind

It is helpful to have a daily formal practice. If possible, set aside a small amount of time early in the morning when you get up, dedicating yourself to any meditation you have learned. If you have only 10, 20 or 30 minutes, however long the time you can spare, that is the time to meditate and just go inwards.

Even if it's very short, it's better to do a short practice constantly, then to do one long practice just once a week. So even if we can only do 10 minutes, 10 minutes every day is more precious than two hours each Sunday. It's the continuity that builds up.

At the same time, we commit ourselves to using this day to be of benefit to ourselves and others. Set your intention or your 'energy GPS': That today I will use my day for the benefit of others. Then whatever happens during our day, we can remember that we want to benefit others. "Others" means the person next to us, our families, our colleagues, ourselves. Not just distant sentient beings out there on the horizons, but also the people around us, the people we meet, the people we know best, our partners, our spouse, our children, our parents, our neighbours, the people we work with. These are all sentient beings, and all sentient beings wish for happiness. Keep that in mind. So we try our best to bring kindness into our relationships with others.

All genuine meditation is based on cultivating a quality of mind, which is called awareness, mindfulness, attention or consciousness. It is a quality of the mind to know, to observe without comment, to be aware without evaluating or judging. This is a very, very important quality in Buddhism to cultivate, and the way to tame the monkey mind.

In all Buddhist schools, we usually start with the breath. If our awareness knows the breath, as it

goes in and out, we stay in the present moment. It is very hard for the egocentric mind to stay in the present, the now. If we get to understand our mind, we recognise just how much our mind is caught up in the past, in memories, comparisons and thinking back to what's happened before—fifty years ago, twenty years ago, yesterday, five minutes ago. Or it jumps forward to our future, our plans, our fantasies, our dreams, our ideas of what will happen next. Our fears of what will happen next. To stay present, right here, right now, without commenting or ruminating in our heads, is



very hard for the mind. Therefore, the very simple meditation on the breath is a very skilful way to bring the mind into the present, to be centred so we can observe and witness.

A simple meditation practice

Let's sit for a while. Keep your feet on the ground. Keep your back straight but not tensed. You can place the back of your right hand on the palm of your left hand, forming a "seal" between the two. Make sure your hands are facing up and rest them lightly on your lap. Or you can place them resting gently on your knees. Just keep the neck slightly down and relax. We stay focused and relaxed. Don't make the mind tight. You have nothing to do except sit, breathe and know that you're breathing. That's it. Breathe normally. The attention should especially be on the out-breath, then after a slight pause, the in-breath, just naturally coming in. Then, the out-breath again, just observing and knowing. That's all. If after a short time, you get bored and the mind gets carried away thinking again, just notice it, and bring your attention back to the

breath. The key to the meditation is to develop the quality of being mindful, of being conscious, of being aware. Be aware of being aware. It's the awareness, rather than just the breath. The breath is like a support for our awareness.

It is a very simple practice but this is the first step in learning how to tame our monkey mind by getting our mind to become more quiet and calm. Watch the monkey mind as the breath goes in and out. Any sounds we hear, just ignore them. They are just sounds. If we get tired, agitated, or overwhelmed during the day, bringing your attention back to breathing in and out for one to two minutes can really help to diffuse the situation and bring our mind back into a state of open, spacious relaxation and attention. We can do our breathing meditation in trains and planes, or traffic jams. We can make use of the red stop lights to practise breathing in and breathing out. Or do like the great Vietnamese master Thich Nhat Hanh's sangha when they hear the bell ring, all of them stop what they are doing and just focus on their breath: breathing in, breathing out. Just for a minute. Back to the present. Back to the *here* and *now*.



We identify with our thoughts, feelings and beliefs

This is a very important step in our spiritual lives because normally we are so identified with our thoughts and feelings that we think, "I am my thoughts and feelings." We believe our thoughts and feelings. People stand by what they believe. People will kill for what they believe. They will die for what they believe.

So the ability to step back and observe our thoughts and feelings as just thoughts and feelings and not "me and mine" is a big step forward. But we cannot do that until we have cultivated the ability to be aware. And we cultivate the ability to be aware by observing the breath.

It goes up step-by-step. You can't skip steps. If we consider the thoughts and feelings we have now like a river, endlessly flowing by, we are caught up and swept along in the river, completely submerged in the river. We are absolutely, totally immersed in our mental world—our thoughts, our feelings, our hopes, our fears, our joys, our sorrows.

We are not our monkey mind

First of all, we should understand that we are not our monkey mind. If we were the monkey, we would not be able to observe the monkey. The fact that we can observe the monkey means we are not the monkey. Do you understand? The fact that we can step out and observe the mind, this mindstream, all the thoughts, means that we are not that mindstream. There are four levels of consciousness beyond the normal, conceptual, mental stream.

We should also feel the space between the witnessing awareness—the mindfulness which knows—and what it is knowing, which is the mental stream. Between the two, there is a space. Thoughts arise from that space and disappear into that space. Normally, because we are so immersed in our thinking, we don't even know there's space there. It's like being surrounded by clouds, we can't even recognise that there are other parts of the sky which are not clouds. So here, we are stepping out and observing the clouds. We're no longer immersed in the clouds. This is very useful. During the day, as

much as possible, we should try to observe the mind.

When I first began, I lived with these yogis and they told me that every hour, I should look at the mind three times. The book said to observe the mind at all times, but you can't do that at all times, you can't even do it once. So we start with a very simple "three times every hour" to make a commitment to stop for a second and look back: "What is the mind doing at this time?" **Normally, we are so carried away by our mind, we're not even aware of what we're thinking, or what we're feeling. So now we're stepping out and we're looking and seeing, what state is the mind in at this time. Are we happy? Peaceful? Focused? Are we anxious? Annoyed? Depressed? What is our mind doing at this moment?**

If the mind is in a positive state,



that's good and we can carry on. If the mind is in a negative state, now that we are aware of it, we apply the antidote.

As an analogy, if the body is sick, we find a remedy to cure the sickness. If we are not even aware that we're sick, our condition is going to degenerate more and more until it's incurable. The mind is just like

that. The Buddha called negative emotions "poisons". They poison our mind and make us sick, so we have to be aware. Is my mind sick? If it is, what poison is doing this, and what remedy and antidote do we use to make the mind healthy again?

During formal meditation, we learn how to make the mind feel more calm, conscious, more aware and present. Then we use that attention to look and observe the mind itself, recognising that we can be centred within ourselves without the need to always be caught up in the turbulence of the mind. As we become more skilled in being aware, the mind begins to calm down and get itself more in order because it's being watched. For example, if we're thinking really negative or foolish thoughts, once we become aware that we're thinking these foolish thoughts, the thoughts cease.

Mastering our mind for happiness

Much of what we do with our mind during the day is just a waste of time and causes a lot of fatigue and stress because we don't know how to use the mind skilfully. Therefore, it is very important to be the master of our mind, to be in control and to know the mind. That's why I highly encourage you to attend meditation retreats because we can become master of our own mind under good guidance on how to work with the mind, understand the mind and make the mind more pliable, workable and serviceable. We would then cease to be driven here and there by the mind which is out of control like a monkey.

We live in our mind but we don't even know what the mind is. What is a thought? Where does it come from? Where does it go to? Who is thinking? Who is the 'I' who is thinking? Find the 'I'. Along with that, it is also very important to open up the heart. All of us want to be happy. Nobody really wants to be depressed, anxious, angry, moody or stressed. How many of us get up in the morning thinking, "Today, I will feel grumpy, angry, irritated and stressed out, depressed and generally hating the world. That's sounds like a nice, good day." Yet, that's how many people are living. Despairing. Depressed. Suicide rates are soaring although outwardly their lives look wonderful and they have so much.

For instance, Singapore is like a god realm. Outwardly, you have everything: a relatively crime-free and clean environment, people are well-dressed with so much to eat, and so much of everything. So why are people not all blissed out? Why are youth in so much stress? Despair? **It is because we live in our minds, and unless our minds are free, we are all enslaved.** Although we all need shelter, sufficient food, education, basic level of security and so forth, our outward situations really have little impact on our inner feelings of well-being.

So first tame the mind by learning how to bring awareness to the forefront of the mind. We all have awareness. It is always there. The problem is that we are not aware of being aware. That awareness gets swept along by our conceptual thinking mind. We are not centred. We get lost in our thoughts of the past or the future. We don't know how to stay present and to

be where we are right now. So, as much as possible, bring the mind back into the present moment, which, in actual fact, is where we are now. When our day begins, think about using it to try and make others—our families, our children, our partners, our parents—just that little bit happier.

The Buddha also taught a meditation on *metta* and *maitri*. We start with ourselves, wishing ourselves well, to be happy and to feel good and cheerful rather than miserable. From there, we send good feelings to people we love (our family, our good friends), the people we see at work, those we see every day but are neutral and not close to, people we don't talk to, maybe neighbours, politicians etc, and then, people that we find difficult or whom we blame. Finally to all beings in the whole world. *May they all be well and happy.* If you are seated in a bus/car/plane/train, imagine that the vehicle is completely filled with light and the light is going into all beings in the vehicle.

Just as I'd rather be happy than miserable, every single being you look at would rather be happy than be miserable and sad. Wish them well. Smile. The Buddha said that to each being, his own self is most precious. So who is to say who is high, who is low? If we each wish that every individual be well and happy during the day, this will also brighten the world. You are sitting in your office surrounded by all these other people in the office, just send out light and wish them all to be well and happy. And be kind.

The six paramitas

The Buddha also taught the six paramitas, the six specially exalted qualities, of which the first is generosity. Second, ethics. Ethics is based on not harming any being in body, speech or mind. Then patience. Patience means that when people annoy us, instead of being angry, we recognise that patience is a very important quality for us to develop. People who annoy and upset us give us the opportunity for developing this quality of patience. It's when people are not nice, don't say the things we want them to say, or do what we want them to do, that we can practise. Instead of getting all upset, we can be more forbearing, more tolerant and grateful. When you have the thought, "Oh, you're so horrible!" Think instead: "Thank you for being so difficult. Now I can really cultivate this important quality needed in order to fulfil our human potential."

THE SIX PARAMITAS:

generosity.

morality.

patience.

energy.

meditation.

wisdom.

The first paramita is generosity. *Dāna*. It doesn't just mean giving things. Asians are very generous, and this is their beautiful quality. I respect very, very much that people are so generous with their money, possessions and time. It's a beautiful quality of the heart and hands. Even if we don't have anything to give materially, we can be generous in being there for people when they need help. We can listen, give them our time and be there for them when they are having problems. So as you go through the day, every single person that you meet is the most important person in the world, at that moment, because he or she is the person you are with. That person should have our full attention.

Buddhist texts say that we should put all others as superior and ourselves as inferior. But this doesn't mean we should cultivate an inferiority complex. What it means is that we should recognise that whoever we are with, that person at that moment is the most important person, and we are not important. So when we meet others, our interest is in them, not in ourselves. Each other person is most dear to himself, so we also treat him as most dear.

As we go through the day, at home, at our work place, in our social situations, we remain aware, present and knowing, centred in this inner space of attention and awareness. Moreover, whatever the situation we face, we try to be helpful, kind, generous, patient and so forth. When negative feelings arise, we notice them: "Oh, we're getting irritated, annoyed because somebody cuts in front of us in traffic or queues. Or people do or say things which make us very upset and angry. We notice all these and

train our mind to be aware of what is happening within us. When we are aware, we can change it. We are conscious and recognise it as soon as a feeling of anger arises. When we recognise it, we are still in control and that gives us a gap to decide how we can deal with it. In this way, we transform.

Shantideva, a great Indian philosopher of the eighth century, said that if we cannot deal with anger when it arises by transforming it or by cultivating patience, then we should be like a block of wood. We should be like a log. In other words, if we cannot transform our anger into mirror-like wisdom or patience, we can at least not react at all. This gives us space to come back into a state of awareness and deal with the situation more skilfully because we are trying to use our daily life skilfully. Everything that happens to us becomes an opportunity to practise. We can walk and be conscious that we are walking. Not thinking of anything, except the act of walking. Anything we do, we can choose to do with mindfulness and awareness, or not. The Buddha said we should be mindful when we're standing, sitting, walking, lying down, at all times. We should know what's going on, be present in body and mind instead of being endlessly distracted.

I once read an article in the *Economist* that neuroscientists have discovered that one of the main causes of stress in the business world is multitasking, trying to do too many things at the same time. They said the problem is that the brain is not wired to multitask. The mind gets very stressed when it does that, becoming less efficient and making mistakes. It doesn't descend to deeper levels of creativity because it's juggling too many balls in the air at the same

time. At the end of the article, it recommended taking a course in mindfulness or doing a meditation retreat as the solution.

Nowadays, mindfulness is a buzzword in psychological and business fields. There is even an ad in *Time* magazine of a new book titled *Mindfulness: The New Science of the Mind*. These people who read *Time* magazine will never buy a Buddhist book but they buy that book and learn how to be mindful and aware. So that's good.

The mind is a brilliant tool, but it is not who we are. We can only recognise that through practice by remembering to be present and aware throughout the day. There are deeper levels of awareness than the duality of observer-observed. Just know where you are. Feel your body. Observe your mood. Just be *here*.

Ajahn Brahm calls it "kindfulness"—being kind and mindful at the same time, remembering that all beings want happiness, especially the one that I am with. Whenever you get frazzled, frustrated or upset, say to yourself: "I am loving awareness." Take that day to tame, train, transform and transcend the monkey mind.

May each and every one of you be well and happy. ☺



Scan this to watch video of the talk by Ven Tenzin Palmo.

Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo is a bhikkhuni in the Drukpa lineage of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism. She is an author, teacher and founder of the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery in India. She is best known for being one of the very few Western yoginis trained in the East, having spent twelve years living in a remote cave in the Himalayas, three of those years in strict meditation retreat.

That Unsettling Feeling

Psychological effects of COVID-19 and how to deal with them

Dr Lee Foong Ming, an assistant professor from the Buddhist College of Singapore shares some tips on dealing with the anxiety and distress that comes with the Covid-19 pandemic.



At the time of completing this article, Singapore is in the second day of "circuit breaker" mode.

In our efforts to contain COVID-19, many regulations have been introduced, from social distancing to work-from-home (WFH) orders. We may not realise it at first, but these regulations have brought about changes in our daily life, slowly building up unease in us just as the number of COVID-19 cases climbs each day. We feel anxious, frustrated and worried, as disruptions and news of deaths due to COVID-19 sweep over us, day in and day out.

Most people I have met put up a stoic front. Yet, behind their emotionless faces which more expressions used to animate, are unsettling feelings of anxiety and distress because we are losing control over what used to be our comfortable norms. Our way of life has been disrupted on so many levels, by a pandemic that is so out of our control.

All these hardheaded and rational approaches to fight COVID-19 seem to produce some negative psychological effects on some people. These negative reactions may be likened to another type of virus that can infect society, if we don't do anything about it.

At the time of writing, both the Resilience Budget (announced on 26 March 2020) and Solidarity Budget (announced on 6 April 2020) have been approved by Parliament. I salute all those involved in the planning and execution of the two Budgets and those in the multi-ministry taskforce on COVID-19. Generally, we feel that we are in good hands.

As a society, Singaporeans will feel assured by the words and work of our leaders. Even if we fall, there are safety nets to catch us and break our fall.

Civil society too has been galvanised by a spirit of togetherness, evident from voluntary efforts to help the needy and vulnerable, either in cash or kind. Indeed, an enhanced community spirit and social engagement is evolving, right in front of our eyes.

However, for those of us who still feel fearful or anxious despite all these safety nets, it means we need extra help, not from outside of us, but from within.

Here are some suggestions to help ourselves from within:

1. Take care of your physical health

Make this your new mantra: "Protecting myself, I protect others; protecting others, I protect myself."

This was taught by the Buddha in SN 47.19 *Sedaka Sutta*, where he said:

"Protecting oneself, bhikkhus, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself."¹

There is an interesting little story behind this teaching:

The Buddha told the story of an acrobat and his apprentice. When the acrobat told his apprentice to climb on his shoulders to execute an antic, he said he would protect the apprentice and the apprentice would protect him. To which the apprentice replied:

"That's not the way to do it, teacher.

You protect yourself, teacher, and I'll protect myself.

Thus, each self-guarded and self-protected, we'll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole."

The Buddha then applied this method to how a monk should train:

"Protecting oneself, bhikkhus, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself."

The reminder to practise "social distancing" and personal hygiene, and to "stay home, stay healthy"



during this COVID-19 pandemic can find support in the Buddha's teaching in this scripture. So although it can feel confining to practise these measures, in this period of dis-ease, the biggest act of generosity we can do is to "stay home, stay healthy". By being mindful of our physical activities, we minimise chances of contracting the virus. This is also how we protect others, even as we protect ourselves. This is one way to allay our fear of contracting the virus.

2. Take care of your mental health

Start your day with a short Dhamma (Dharma) practice

Now that most of us are subjected to WFH arrangements, distractions in our home surroundings and from familial commitments compete with our jobs for our attention, time and energy. We seem to be in a guilt-trap of unfulfilled familial responsibilities and work commitments. Frustrations build up as we lose our patience and energy. Night falls, but our commitments have not been fulfilled. We struggle to fall asleep just to wake up in dread for another messy day.

If we start our day with such a cluttered mind, chances are, the day will turn out to be a mess. To help

clear our mind and set the right intention for the day, we could do a short Dhamma practice like a short prayer or a five-minute meditation.

After this short Dhamma practice when our mind is calmer, we could survey the tasks of the day and mentally draw up a priority list. The Buddha was said to survey the world every morning after his meditation, to see which individual was ripe for Dhamma that day. We could follow our Teacher's practice and survey our tasks for the day and see which are due for action. By doing so, we will have a clear objective for the day.

3. Overcome fear, anxiety and frustrations with generosity

When we get stuck in a situation and feel negative, our focus invariably is on how much we suffer, how others have caused us to be in a fix. We are engrossed with ourselves and our dire state, reeling from anger, fear or anxiety. Unless we have been cultivating the mind, it is really hard in these moments of negativity to tackle such unconstructive emotions head on. To take a small step away from this self-centred obsession, we shift to consider looking away from ourselves to others—what problems they are suffering from. This has the effect of giving us a bigger perspective of our problems, and to fill the mind with generosity. When we engage ourselves in acts of generosity, we will overcome our negative emotions with the positive energy of generosity.

As we all know, in Buddhism, *dāna* (giving) does not only refer to monetary offerings. Looking around us now during this COVID-19 pandemic, we see people helping others through giving free food, and volunteering in various community

services. We can be part of this kind of giving. But if time and energy do not allow us to be giving in this way, even a warm greeting to our friends and colleagues to help them start their day with a smile is a *dāna*. If we start our day with a Dhamma practice, as suggested above, we can also share the merits generated from our practice with all beings and those we want to help.

In *Itivuttaka* 1.26, the Buddha encouraged us to give, saying:

"If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of selfishness overcome their minds."²

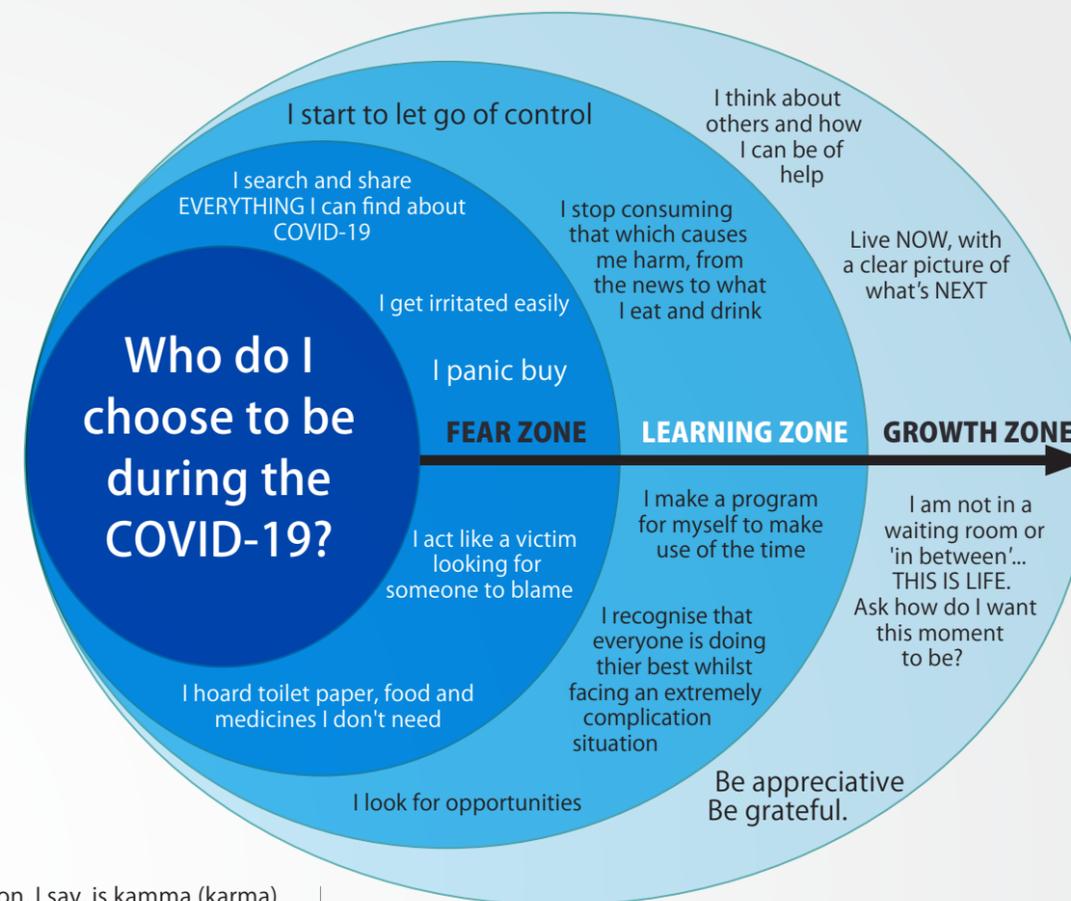
The acts of generosity also make our daily grind at work worthwhile. While tending to our families and toiling away at our jobs, fighting tears and frustration, we use our hard-earned money in meaningful ways, supporting our loved ones and the less privileged among us.

The joy and fulfillment when we see that even with our little means we are able to help a fellow human being is priceless. This teaching can be applied to a more mundane situation: when we next experience the urge to panic-buy, perhaps this verse "give, even if you have little" from *Dhammapada* will inspire us to share resources, and leave some things on the shelves for the next person.

The positive energy from generosity will help us look at our own fear, anxiety and frustration in a new light, and thus give us fresh new energy to face our challenges again.

4. Spur ourselves on by setting the right intention

In the *Nibbedhika sutta* (AN 6.63), the Buddha taught us that:



"Intention, I say, is kamma (karma). Having made intention, one does kamma by way of body, speech and mind."

Hence, what kind of actions do we intend to create in this stressful period? When all is past and gone, what do we want to remember of ourselves riding out the tsunami of a pandemic?

The diagram above titled "Who do I choose to be during COVID-19?" is making its round on Twitter and the Internet, and many find it useful. It gives us some food for thought as we align ourselves with the Buddha's teaching above on intention and action (kamma).

Perhaps most of us are now in the "Learning Zone", some of us even in the "Growth Zone". But for those of us still lingering in the "Fear Zone", perhaps we can allow ourselves to be inspired by all the wholesome

attitudes and actions around us, and begin to take the courageous first step out of the "Fear Zone"?

Last but not least, in the midst of all the doom and gloom, why not treat ourselves to some humour? Like this one:

"With the freedom to WFH comes great responsibility."

Let's test the adage "laughter is the best medicine" on our real-life situation now.

May I be well and happy; may I be positive and patient to face the flurry of changes amid the pandemic.

May I be the firefly in the depth of darkness, emitting hope and joy to all beings around me. ☺

¹ <https://legacy.suttacentral.net/en/sn47.19>

² <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/iti/iti.1.001-027.than.html#iti-026>

Dr Lee Foong Ming graduated from the National University of Singapore and did her postgraduate studies in Buddhist Studies in the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She specialised in Sarvastivada Abhidharma and received her PhD degree after seven years of studies. Since her return to Singapore, she has been teaching and has eight years of experience in teaching Buddhism for academic courses.

Acceptance and Empowerment

Q I feel so angry whenever life throws a nasty surprise. How can I deal with negative situations and my feelings in a wiser manner? – AF

A: Underneath our anger, we often find a refusal to accept the reality of the situation and a feeling of powerlessness in its face. These feelings are related, because the confusion that arises from fighting the reality of an event makes us feel helpless and unable to influence it. Once we accept what is happening, we can determine more clearly the parameters of possible action and feel empowered to act.

Accept what is happening

Often, we become angry because our mind does not accept the reality of whatever is happening and wants it to be different. We may develop many reasons why things should be different, but that doesn't change the reality.

Jackie ate a healthy diet and

exercised, yet she was diagnosed with cancer at age forty-two. Her mind spun in disbelief, "I took such good care of my health. This can't happen to me!" Presupposing the worst, she fell into depression and did little to deal constructively with her illness. After attending a support group at the Wellness Centre, Jackie came to accept that she had cancer. In addition, she met many others who had it and survived. Their examples encouraged her and, feeling more in control of the situation, she began to research various treatment options in order to make a wise decision. Feeling that she had some power to deal with the situation, she began taking better care of herself physically and mentally. When I met her several years later, she was in good health and told me that the cancer had made her grow in ways that she

could not have imagined previously. "As strange as it may sound," she said, "I now see the cancer as a gift."

Some people think that acceptance means not trying to change the situation and fear that such an attitude could be used to support abuse or oppression. However, this is not the case. **Acceptance simply means fully accepting that what is happening now is indeed happening, even if we do not like what it is. We stop fighting the reality of the present moment and let go of our anger.** Nevertheless, we can still aspire and work towards improving the situation in the future. In fact, acceptance of the present enables us to think more clearly about effective means for influencing what will happen next.

Act or Relax

The great Indian sage, Shantideva said:

*Why be unhappy about something
If it can be remedied?*

*And what is the use of being
unhappy about something
If it cannot be remedied?*

If we face an unpleasant situation and can change it, why get angry? We can act and either extricate ourselves or improve the situation. On the other hand, if we cannot alter the situation, why get angry? There's nothing effective we can do, so we are better off relaxing. Becoming agitated only compounds our suffering.

This technique is also helpful if we worry a lot. We can ask ourselves, "Can I do something about this situation?" If the answer is yes, then there's no need to worry. Act. If the answer is no, then there's no use for worry. We can relax, see what happens, and deal with it the best we can.

A high school teacher, Ben, prepared his students for the upcoming state exams as best as he could. As exam time approached, he began to worry about his students' performance. The students sensed his apprehension and became anxious themselves. Realising the unproductive effect his uneasiness was having on them, he said to himself, "We have worked hard together all semester. They are good students and will do their best. I trust them and give them

my caring support." He breathed deeply, relaxed, and spent the last few days before the exam cheerfully encouraging them. His students responded to his ease and did fine on the exams.

Discover Power

Feeling helpless often instigates anger: a child becomes angry when she feels helpless in meeting her parent's expectations; an ill person is irascible when he cannot control his surroundings; an employee defensively lashes out when his boss is unhappy with his work. In all these situations, those who are unable to control certain circumstances angrily blame others for their unhappy feelings of powerlessness.

Interestingly, in most conflict situations, both parties feel that the other is more powerful. In the above examples, the parents feel helpless when their child lashes out in frustration; the family members feel overwhelmed by the patient's abrasive speech; the manager is concerned that if the project deadline is not met, she will have to answer for her subordinate's inefficiency. Because we are interdependent, everyone in a situation affects the others. However, we are seldom aware that the person we consider powerful

is also dependent on others and may feel helpless at times as well. Simply being aware of this can lessen our own discomfort and make the situation more manageable, because we will see ourselves not as helpless victims but as interdependent players.

Recognising this, we can start to change. Together with acceptance of the present situation, we can initiate action that will affect the future in a positive way. Suffering from terminal cancer, Rod would angrily ring the call button at all hours of the day and night and demand that his nurses and family members give him more pain medication even when he had just had some. Tired of this, one nurse made it possible for Rod to administer the pain medication himself by pressing a button when he felt the need for more. Suddenly, the complaints stopped. Looking back on it, everyone realised that Rod's difficult behaviour had been due to his not having control over any aspect of his situation. Once he had control over even one aspect—his pain medication—his feelings of powerlessness declined, and he became more relaxed and amenable to receiving help in other ways.

Dale's boss had called him in to say she was disappointed with his work. While some bosses help their subordinates improve in such situations, this one threatened him with a negative review if he didn't improve. Becoming defensive, Dale wanted to say something nasty, but he realised that doing so would only put his job at even more at risk. Instead of wallowing in feelings of helpless dismay, he thought about the positive steps he could take to feel more powerful in the situation. He learned about his company's policy regarding warnings, citations and review. He went to see the manager again, and together they



worked out and put in writing what Dale's job entailed and the criteria and method by which his work would be evaluated. They set a date to meet again to see how he was progressing. In addition, when Dale felt the need to express his frustration with his work situation, he spoke with friends outside work, who offered helpful suggestions. In this way, he avoided venting to his colleagues, which would have only stirred them up and created more tension in the office. Thus, Dale's initial anger, which stemmed from feeling powerless, vanished as he took active steps to learn ways to improve his situation.

Have a Compassionate Heart

While we can sometimes gain more control in a situation, at other times we cannot. Here mental transformation is crucial.

I receive letters from prisoners in the US who are interested in learning Buddhism. Although conditions in US prisons are good, in some aspects they can be dangerous. Nevertheless, several inmates who have regular meditation practice tell me that they are happy for the opportunity to practise in a prison environment. "There is always someone for whom we can generate love and compassion. We are surrounded by people whom we have the possibility to help in some big or small way," they say. Even those unjustly harmed by the policy of mandatory minimum sentencing accepted their situation and use it to practise.

Terminal illness is another situation we can't control that could easily slip into feelings of powerlessness, depression and anger. Death will happen to each of us; it's a natural outcome of life, and acceptance, rather than rejection, of this facilitates our having a tolerable

dying process and a peaceful death. One of my teachers, Lama Thubten Yeshe exemplified this. He literally had a hole in his heart, and his doctors could not believe he remained alive for so long. In spite of his severe health condition, he was always cheerful and helpful to his numerous students. **Those who cared for him after he became too debilitated to teach said that Lama maintained his focus on the well-being of others. He graciously accepted his continuously weakening condition and increasing dependence on others to help him with every facet of his life. Although he had little control of his physical condition, his mind was pacified, hence not only was he happy, he also brought joy to those who cared for him.**

Accept that Our Control Is Limited

Expecting to be happy and to be treated fairly, we feel that we have control or should have control over all that happens to us. But in fact, our control is limited. On the most basic level, although we can control some bodily functions, most of them are outside of our control. We become old, sick, and die without choice. Similarly, we have little control over our minds. Five minutes of trying to focus on our breath quickly reveals that our mind wanders here and there without our control. If we cannot control the most basic elements of our experience—our body and mind—how can we possibly control what other people say and do? Yet we falsely think we should be able to. Raising a child is a good example of how we are able to influence, but not control, another person. Each parent does what he or she can to raise his or her children to have good values, a cheerful disposition, and behaviour that enables them to get along well with

others. Yet, children are not their parents' possessions. The parents cannot ensure that a child turns out the way they would like. Likewise, it is not helpful to confront a relative or close friend with his substance-abuse problem thinking that he will change. We have to be there and help in whatever wise ways we can, but we cannot crawl inside another person and pull a few switches to alter his behaviour and the attitudes motivating it.

From the Buddhist point of view, we are all trapped in cyclic existence—the constantly recurring problems involved in repeated birth and death—by our own ignorance, anger and clinging attachment.

Ignorance misconceives the nature of reality by grasping onto ourselves and all phenomena as real and independent. This gives rise to clinging to what gives us happiness and hostility towards whatever interferes with our happiness. These, in turn, motivate confused actions that harm us and others. Given this present state of affairs, our world is imperfect and we will experience unhappiness. On the one hand, we would be happier if we could stop railing against the "unfairness of it all" and develop instead the tolerant ability to endure suffering, as long as its causes exist. On the other hand, we do not need to look forward to only more problems in life, for if we develop the determination and ability to eliminate their causes—ignorance, anger and attachment—we can arrive at a state of lasting happiness, *nirvana*. Many people have done this before us. The path and the guides are there; we need only follow them. ☺

- Venerable Thubten Chodron
www.thubtenchodron.org
www.sravasti.org

Everyday
Zen

THE WARRIOR

Illustration & text: Johny Tay • [Everyday Zen studios \(everydayzen.sg\)](http://Everyday Zen studios (everydayzen.sg))
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Once upon a time, there was a young apprentice warrior who aspired to greatness. His teacher told him that to achieve greatness, he would have to battle Fear.

The warrior didn't want that. Fear was a notoriously fearsome adversary. There was no other way, advised the teacher, and made preparations for the duel.

On the day of the great battle, the young warrior stood on one side, and Fear stood on the other end. Fear looked gargantuan and wrathful indeed; it made the warrior feel very small.

They brandished their weapons, and the warrior approached Fear. Once he was right in front of Fear, he prostrated three times and asked, "May I have permission to go into battle with you?"

Showing no sign of surprise, Fear replied, "Thank you for showing me so much respect that you asked for my permission."

The warrior continued, "How may I defeat you?"

Fear explained, "My weapons are that I talk fast and I get very close to your face. Then you get completely unnerved and do whatever I say. But if you don't do what I tell you, I have no power. You can listen to me, you can have respect for me, you can even be convinced by me; but if you don't do what I say, I have no power."

So in that way, the apprentice warrior learned how to conquer Fear.

In life, it is normal to feel fearful when things are falling apart, but



*If something bad follows you wherever you go,
maybe it came from within you.*

Fear only gets hold of you when you succumb to Fear's point of view. From a different perspective, adversity can be an opportunity to learn and grow.

How often is it that the things you fear never really come to fruition? When you see ominous storm clouds looming, you lament over forgetting to bring an umbrella; but the storm clouds may simply pass over. When you are certain that you'll pay the price for a mistake, you lament over the better choice you should have made; but that mistake may lead you to new opportunities.

Most of Fear's power feeds off your own mind. Your proverbial "monkey mind" plays out the endless scenarios that the unfortunate

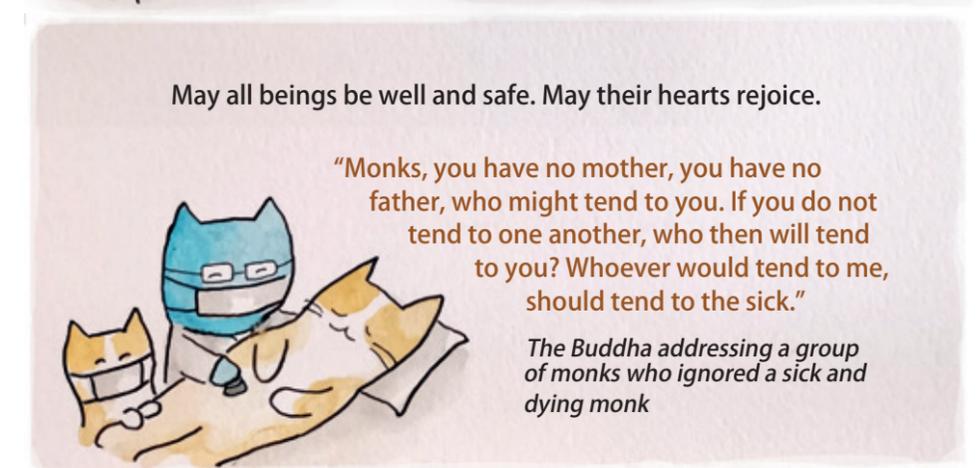
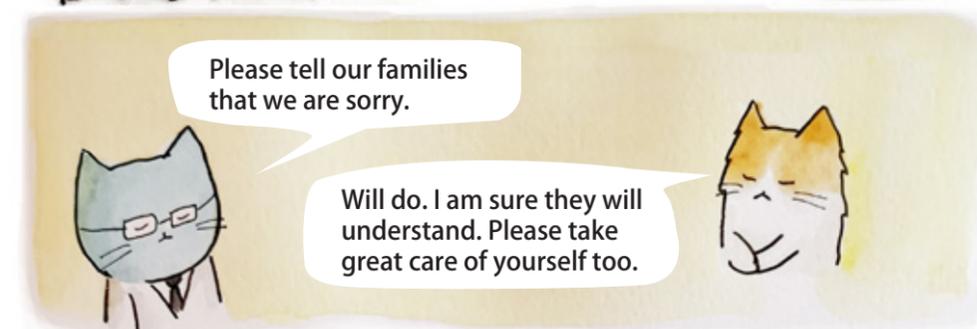
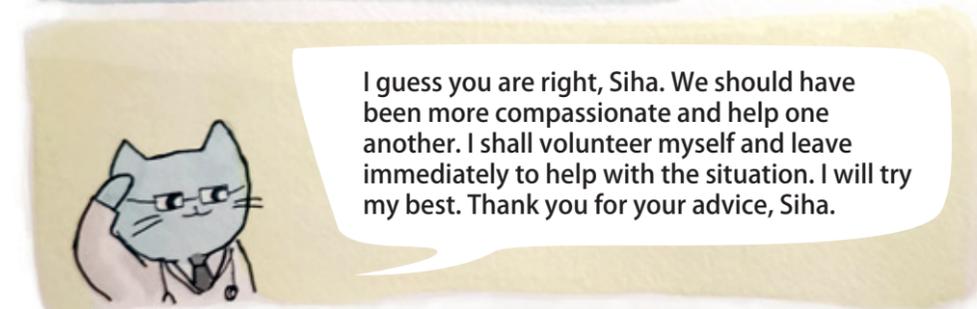
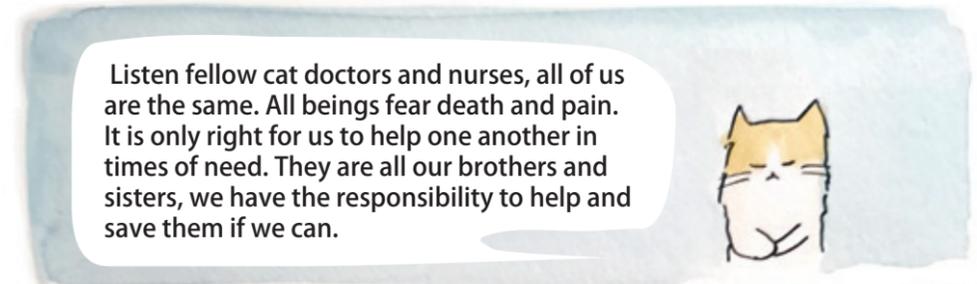
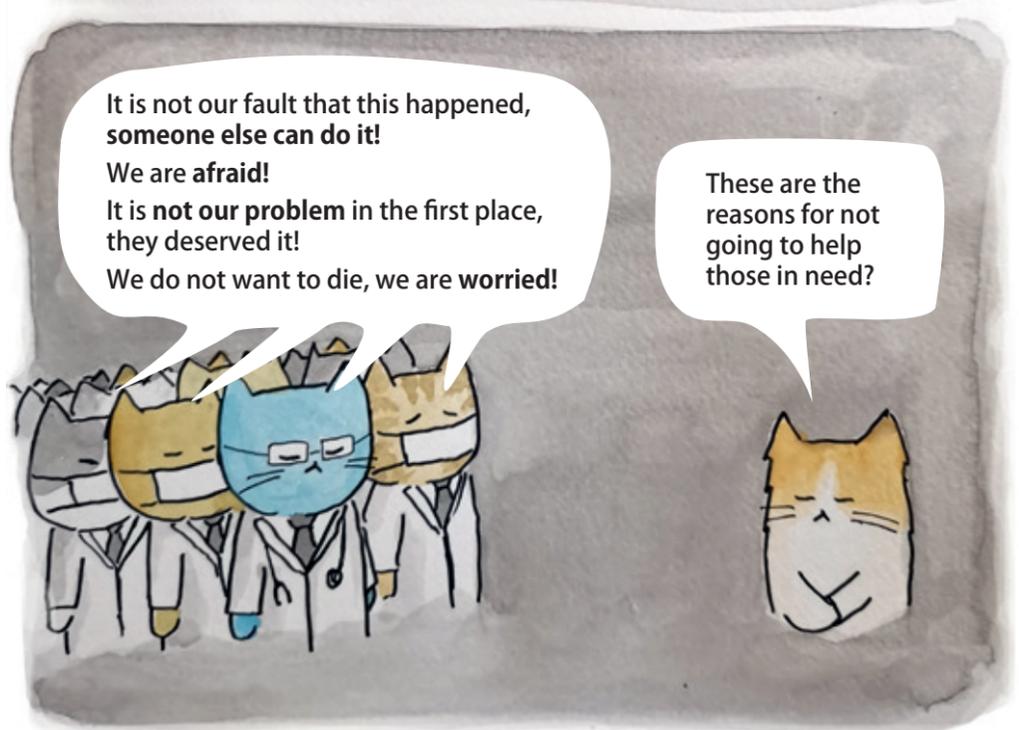
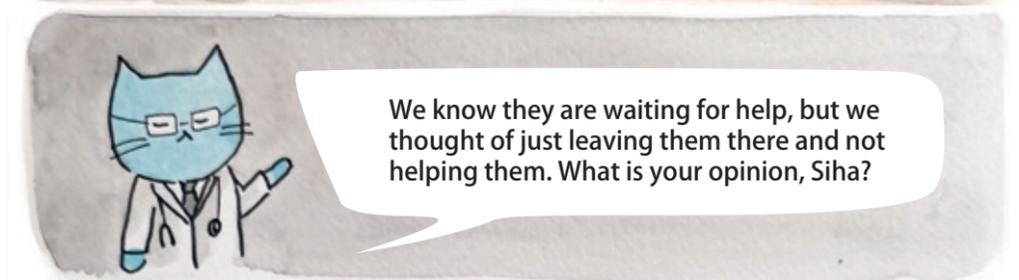
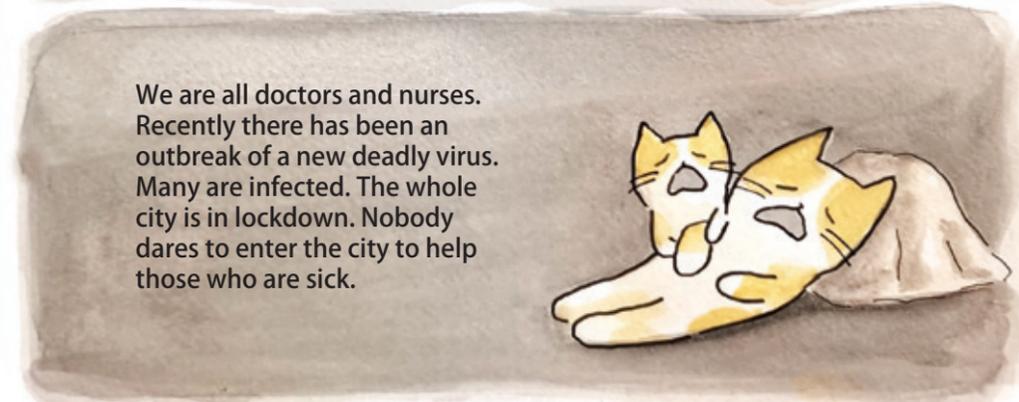
event may unfold, crippling your capacity for insight or response. Sometimes, you are your biggest enemy.

And even when your worst fears come to fruition, seek the silver lining. Some people wax lyrical about Fear but have never faced it. Other people ignore Fear, charging headlong into all manner of dangers to prove their worth. Both of these are unwise responses. The wise learn to understand Fear and perceive it as an opportunity to do things better.

A life of meaning and richness is built on a foundation of understanding Fear and the truth that suffering is a teacher. When you look beyond Fear's frightful appearances, you have the opportunity for true growth. ☺

HELPING THE SICK

KUCCHIVIKARA-VATTHU (MV 8.26.1-8)
Illustrations & text: Law Wen Hui



On Anxiety and Fear

Text: Sarah Naphali, author of *Buddhism for Mothers*

It's a funny thing. The older I grow, the more often I feel anxiety. I suppose when I was younger, I lived in denial about my own mortality, whereas by the age of forty, it has finally sunk in that I will die and that sickness and old age are highly likely. The responsibility as a mother also creates anxiety.

What is important in my Buddhist practice is that I accept the occasional bout of anxiety for the impermanent state that it is. There is no need to fight it and force myself into an instant false calm. I can allow the anxiety to run its course, be with it, watch its journey and learn from it. The awareness alone will soften the experience. In order to grow in compassion for ourselves and others, we need to practise tolerance for the whole spectrum of mental states in order to know ourselves deeply and grow in compassion for ourselves and others.

And what does the average parent fear? Failure, ageing, death, feelings of inadequacy, of not getting what we want or losing what we have, of getting what we do not want, that we or our children will suffer in any way.



In times of fear, we need to turn inwards and ask ourselves, "What do I really need? What am I fooling myself about needing?"

We could also ask ourselves, "Given that happiness comes from within, why am I relying so heavily on external conditions which are impermanent to make me happy?"

The Buddha diagnoses fear as our need to protect our false sense of a consistent, unchanging self. The greatest fear of this constructed self is non-existence, and pursuing the various attachments that feed the ego helps to

reassure this false self that it exists. We confuse our desires with who we are: I am this job that I want; I am a good parent whose children never suffer; That house or car is who I am.

As if. ☹️

Excerpted from the book, *Buddhism for Parents on the Go*

Threats and Anxiety...

Text: Ajahn Jayasaro

The strength of our anxiety bears no fixed relationship to the severity of the threats that we face in life. We can be as anxious about things that have almost no likelihood of occurring as about things that pose a real danger to our well-being. Anxiety is not caused by our sense of threat, it is what we add on to it.

Allowing the mind to dwell again and again on the worst case scenario makes it seem far more likely to occur than the situation warrants. Taking care of our physical health needs to be accompanied by a sincere effort to take care of our mental health. We need to catch ourselves when we get caught up in anxious thoughts and gently but firmly put them down, again and again. We can motivate ourselves by remembering that anxiety and its associated states of stress and panic weaken our immune system and make us more vulnerable to the very illness that we fear.

Times of threat and uncertainty bring out both the best and worst in humanity. Let us be in the group that rises up to the challenges with self-discipline and mindfulness, calm and good humour,

with consideration for those around us and compassion for all.

Meditation plays a vital role in providing us with a space in which we can digest and evaluate our experiences in daily life. This is important because our conduct

been dismissing as insignificant, is in fact very serious and needs to be dealt with immediately.

Thoughts, perceptions, views that have seemed so real and meaningful can now come to be seen as unfounded and



Photo Credit: Alexas_Fotos

is often conditioned by fears, anxieties, desires and attachments in ways in which we are scarcely, if at all, aware. We make so many avoidable mistakes.

It is not that we use our meditation sessions to review the issues that we are currently dealing with in our lives. It is more that as we become more mindful, more calm, more stable, more bright, clear and energised, certain insights pop up into our minds. For example, the realisation that some problem that has been keeping us awake at night is really a very minor matter, can suddenly appear in the mind. Or the recognition that some matter we'd

insubstantial. The meaning of the wise words of our teachers can suddenly come alive.

Wisdom, beginning with these kinds of insights and culminating in the penetration of the three characteristics, is our goal. As meditators, our challenge is to create the conditions for wisdom to arise. ☺️

Ajahn Jayasaro is a Theravada bhikkhu in the Thai Forest tradition. He received full ordination by Ajahn Chah in 1980, and was abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat from 1997 to 2002. In 2019, Jayasaro was honoured with a royal title from Thailand's King Vajiralongkorn (Rama X).



Text : Jack Kornfield

Little fears cause anxiety, and big fears cause panic. – Chuang Tzu

Each time we meet other human beings and honour their dignity, we help those around us.

Their hearts resonate with ours. Western psychology has documented the phenomenon of “mood contagion” or limbic resonance.

If a person filled with panic or hatred walks into a room, we feel it immediately, and unless we are very mindful, that person’s negative state will begin to affect and overtake our own.

Although most of us have been deeply conditioned by fear, for the most part, we have avoided directly exploring its nature. Since we are not aware of its workings, it is often an unconscious driving force in our lives. When fear arises, whether it’s a fear of pain, fear of certain emotions, or fear of death, the meditation practice of mindful loving awareness invites us to explore and understand fear itself. What does it feel like? What are the sensations in the body? Where are they located? Are there images or pictures in the mind? We can look

closely to see the constellation of experiences we call fear, to understand its true nature. When we do so we see that fear is also a passing conditioned experience, and then it becomes much more manageable.

Start simply. When fear arises, name it softly and experience what it does to the breath, to the body, how it affects the heart. Notice how long it lasts. Be aware of the images. Notice the sensations and ideas that accompany it, the scary stories it tells.

Fear is always an anticipation of the future, an imagination, often unfounded. As Mark Twain remarked, “My life has been filled with terrible misfortunes—most of which never happened.”

Of course, when we work with the fearful mind, we will initially become afraid. However, at some point, if we open our eyes and heart to the fearful mind and gently name it, “fear, fear, fear,” experiencing its energy as it moves through us, the whole sense of fear will shift and eventually become recognition: “Oh, fear, here you are again. I know you. How interesting that you’ve come.” Make friends with your fear.

From this foundation of loving awareness and acceptance we can make choices about how to act with some degree of discriminating wisdom. Sometimes it is wise to retreat from a situation, and sometimes we move ahead despite the fear. We become more willing to take some risks because our energy is not so bound up in resisting the feeling of fear itself. We learn that it is okay to feel fear. Our mindfulness practice should challenge us to come to the edge of what we’re willing to be with, what we’re willing to do, what we’re willing to be open to. If we keep avoiding the feeling of fear, then we have to build barriers and defences, closing ourselves off from every experience where fear might arise. Not only is this impossible to do, but it results in a narrow and restricted way of living. We close our hearts and close

off the possibility of true vitality, compassion and growth.

Practising meditation with patience and courage, we can gradually learn to trust, how to sit firmly on the earth and kindly sense the contraction and trembling of our body without running away. We learn how to feel the floods of strong emotions—fear, grief and rage—and to allow them to slowly be released with mindfulness. We learn to see the endless mental stories that repeat over and over, and with the resources of mindfulness and compassion, to let them go and relax, to steady the mind and return to the present. Befriending fear becomes a gateway to freedom, an invitation to live more fully with trust and love.

Start just here. Tune into your heart. That is where love, wisdom, grace and compassion reside. With loving attention, feel deeply what matters most to you. Yes, there are anxious thoughts, grief and trauma, but don’t let your heart be colonised by fear. Take time to soothe the mind and tend to the heart. Go out and look at the sky. Breathe in and open yourself to the vastness of space. Sense the seasons changing, the rise and fall of dynasties and eras. Breathe out and dwell in loving awareness. Practise equanimity and steadiness. Learn from the trees. Become the still point in the centre of it all. Then step towards difficulty with courage and love, and touch pain with healing rather than fear.

Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that in uncertain times, our own steadiness can become a sanctuary for others. “When the crowded Vietnamese refugee boats met with storms or pirates, if everyone panicked, all would be lost. But if even one person on the boat remained calm and centred, it was enough. It showed the way for everyone to survive.”

In these days of shared difficulties, first make your heart a zone of peace. And then, with courage and calm, you can act, you can speak up, help those in need, dialogue with others, register voters, feed the hungry, care for the vulnerable, contribute to the whole. Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes, “Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching to mend the part that is within our reach.”

Together, with compassion for all, let us tie our shoes and walk in the direction of truth. ☺

Jack Kornfield trained as a Buddhist monk in the monasteries of Thailand, India and Burma under Buddhist masters Ven Ajahn Chah and Ven Mahasi Sayadaw. He has taught meditation internationally since 1974 and is one of the key teachers to introduce Buddhist mindfulness practice to the West. Over the years, Jack who holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, has taught in centres and universities worldwide, led International Buddhist Teacher meetings, and worked with many of the great teachers of our time. His books have been translated into 20 languages and sold more than a million copies.



What We Have Appreciating

Photo Credit: Foto-Rabe

Happiness is less about getting what you want, and more about wanting what you have

Text loosely translated by:
Oh Puay Fong
Original Chinese article,
不是理所当然
written by **Xin Qi**
is published in issue 42

The biggest plague afflicting modern society is taking everything for granted, as if everything happens as a matter of course. People feel as if everyone else owes it to them and that they are entitled to everything as a right. With such an attitude, the number of unhappy and grouchy people will increase exponentially.

Even in the microcosm of a school, this mindset is prevalent. Some students ask for a deadline extension to submit their assignment. When the teacher refuses, the students complain that the teacher lacks empathy. A student is absent on a test day due to illness. The school rules clearly stipulate that in such cases, the student must produce a medical certificate in order to be allowed to take the test. Otherwise, a zero score will be given. Even though the student explicitly tells his or her parents about the rule, the parents refuse to take the child to a

doctor because they already have medication at home. Instead, they expect the teacher to bend the rules. The academic calendar states clearly when the school holidays start, but parents insist on taking their children for a vacation during school term. If everyone insists on getting his or her own way, what is the point of having school rules? Sadly, both parents and students expect the school to make exceptions for them, defeating the whole point of education and socialisation.

Last year, I started helping out in a "50=100" supermarket project. The project aimed to lessen the financial burden of low-income families by letting them use 50 dollars every month to purchase 100 dollars' worth of daily necessities. This was made possible through the collaboration of kind donors and socially-conscious supermarkets. Each time, a large group of volunteers would come forth to

serve as sales personnel, cashiers, security or administrative assistants. Some of the beneficiary-families are exemplary in contentment and would buy only what they need, and would constantly thank the volunteers.

However, the majority were disgruntled because they were farther back in the queue and could not buy what they wanted when it came to their turn. They kept complaining, with some even throwing the admission tickets at the volunteers, saying, "The fruits I want are now out of stock, so there's no need to go in anymore, you're wasting my time!" Some complained that there was no sesame oil, while others said that the brand of laundry powder they wanted had run out; they vented their frustration on the volunteers. What they did not realise was that all the "working staff" were volunteers who had devoted their weekend leisure time and energy to help these low-income families. Instead, these recipients harped on the queue sequence, or the quantity of merchandise available. Some families took things even further by stockpiling large quantities of toilet paper—possibly for resale to make money—exploiting the donors' goodwill for personal monetary gains. It was truly lamentable.

We should not take for granted or abuse other people's kindness and help. To think, "I am poor, therefore you must help me" is unreasonable.

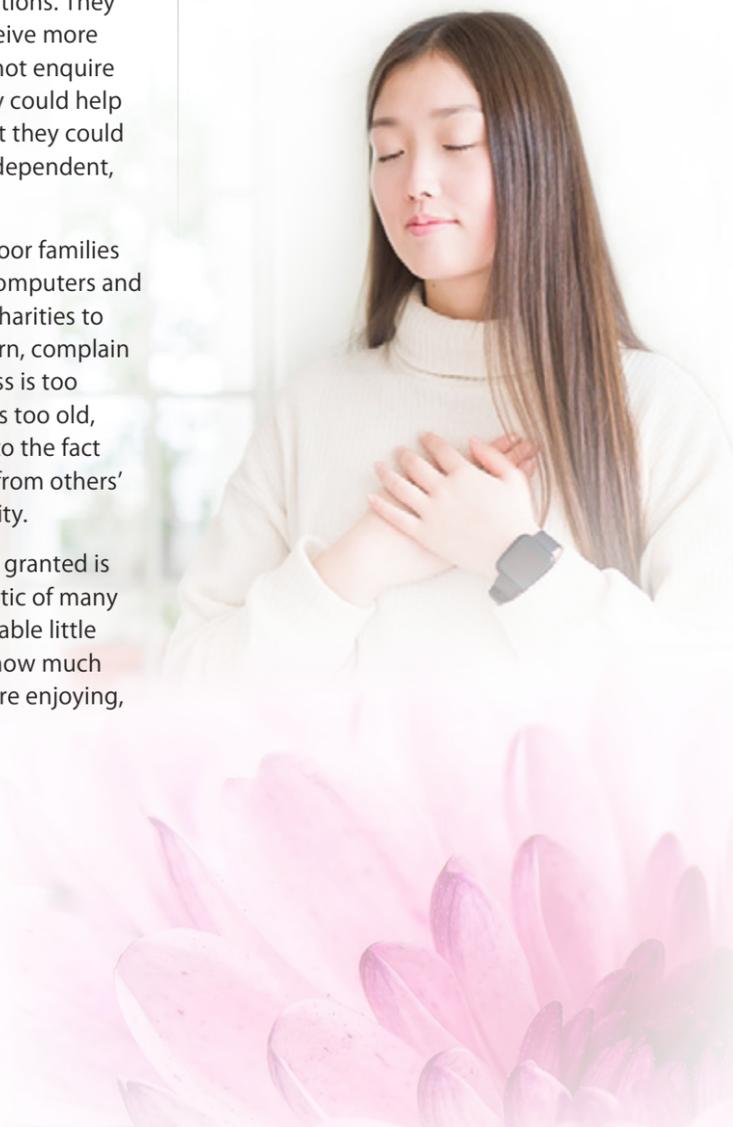
Recently, as part of her volunteer work, my younger sister had to look into the situation of two sisters in order to provide them with the most appropriate help. Both sisters had quit their jobs when their parents fell ill. The whole family relied on public assistance and meal deliveries from charities for their daily needs. Their father passed away last year and their mother, this year. Their responsibilities no doubt lessened considerably. Yet, when they sought help from the community, they wanted sponsorship to cover the funeral costs or outright donations. They were only keen to receive more financial aid, and did not enquire at all if the community could help them find work so that they could become financially independent, moving forward.

There are also some poor families who, after receiving computers and internet access from charities to help their children learn, complain that the internet access is too slow, or the computers too old, completely oblivious to the fact that these gifts came from others' kindness and generosity.

To take everything for granted is a common characteristic of many people in our comfortable little island. People forget how much they already have or are enjoying,

and focus instead on magnifying how much they don't have or are missing.

Despite experiencing a decent standard of living, their complaints are more incessant than those fighting for their lives in war-torn or conflict zones! It is unbelievable! Satiety does not come from unlimited riches. Happiness cannot be bought with money. The key is to have a grateful heart that appreciates what one has. ☺



Enchanting Elements in Elemen

Elemen is a mid-range plant-based restaurant which started in 2015. In my view, there are several things that set them apart from other vegetarian restaurants.

Firstly, they put in effort to garnish their dishes using natural ingredients such as flowers and fruits. Secondly, their menu comes with an ingredient legend, which is exceptionally useful for diners who have strict dietary requirements such as pure vegan, no eggs or milk, or if you are allergic to nuts. Last but not least, they update their menu regularly. Even if you have already tried EVERYTHING on their regular menu, there is a seasonal menu as a backup, e.g., the Christmas menu, Chinese New Year menu.

The menu is categorised with items in each category in multiples of four! There are four types of salads, soups and desserts; eight types of beverages (four hot and four cold) and 12 types of mains. The restaurant offers both *ala carte* dishes and set meals. The five-course meal, comprising a starter, salad or soup, main course,

dessert and beverage costs S\$26.80++. The eight-course meal (S\$32.80++) comes with bread, both salad and soup, plus apple cider, in addition to the items from the five-course meal. Prices for the main courses range from S\$12.80 to S\$18.80.

Here are my recommendations:

1) Dry Truffle Ramen (S\$15.80)
Japanese style shoyu based noodles with runny egg yolk and russet-wrapped "prawn".

2) Wild Mushroom and White Truffle Pizza (S\$16.80)
Six-slice thin crust fusion pizza bringing out the Italian and Japanese styles.

3) Tempura Tofu and Avocado Roll (S\$15.80)
Thin and crispy tempura batter surround the tender tofu. The rice rolls encase crispy fillings and are topped with fresh avocados.

4) Chilled Pumpkin Puree with Coconut Ice Cream (S\$8.80)
A unique dish combining the savoury puree, the sweet *pulut hitam* (black glutinous rice) and fragrant coconut ice cream.

5) The Elemen appetizer
This is a three-item appetiser. Interestingly, the service staff will suggest consuming the appetiser from light, medium to strong taste.

With the variety of options on their menu, Elemen is a



good choice for lunch, dinner, afternoon tea or a post-dinner dessert place. Of the four outlets, Harbourfront Centre

is my favourite because of its spaciousness and I get a slight peek of the Sentosa cable-car because of the full-length glass windows. ☺



Overall Ratings:

Food: 8.5/10
Ambience: 8/10
Service: 8/10

Address:

Elemen (4 Outlets):
Millenia Walk
9 Raffles Boulevard #01-75A/76
Singapore 039596

Harbourfront Centre
1 Maritime Square #02-85
Singapore 099253

Great World City
1 Kim Seng Promenade #01-122
Singapore 237994

PLQ Mall
10 Paya Lebar Road #03-13
Singapore 409057

Details are available at
www.elemen.com.sg

Text & Photos: Jos Tan

Get in the groove of a meat-free diet.

Grove cafe is a quick service vegetarian restaurant with a casual setting that serves to encourage meatless dining and a sustainable lifestyle. It is part of the Elemen group's effort to offer affordable meat-free dining in line with its Elemen restaurants' concept of fine dining.

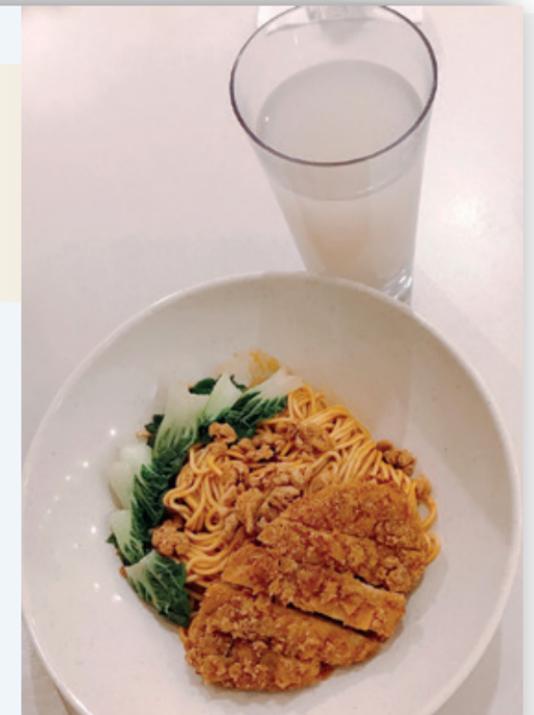
What caught my attention is the *Rendang Curry with Blue Pea Nasi Lemak* (S\$8.80). To be frank, I have a weakness for blue pea flowers so I will never miss a chance to try any dish that uses Blue Pea Flower as one of its ingredients. The whole dish looked exquisite. Besides the rice, I love its fragrant *rendang*, *otah* and accompanied with crispy *poppadoms*, which is a real match made in heaven.

For friends who can't take spicy food, I recommend the *Truffle La Mian* (S\$8.80) and *Braised Mushroom Rice* (S\$7.80). These two dishes are inspired by Taiwanese-styled *Braised Pork Rice*, *Dry La Mian* or also known as *Gan Lao Mian*. The café also serves toast and beverages for

breakfast and tea. You will surely find something to enjoy at any time of the day.

After its successful launch at SingPost Centre, Grove Cafe has expanded by opening one more outlet in the Singapore Management University, right in the heart of Singapore. I believe this is a great move by Grove Cafe to cater to Millennials who wish to adopt a sustainable dining lifestyle but lack vegetarian food options on campus.

Overall, Grove Cafe serves tasty, creative vegetarian dishes that are reasonably priced. Its casual atmosphere is also pleasant and comfortable. ☺



Overall Ratings:

Food: 8/10
Ambience: 7/10
Service: 6/10

Address:

SingPost Centre
10 Eunos Rd 8, #01-151,
Singapore 408600

Opening Hours:
7.30am to 9pm

SMU

Li Ka Shing Library,
70 Stamford Road #01-21
Singapore 178901

Opening Hours:
Mon to Fri, 7am - 8pm;
Sat, 7am - 5pm

Website:
www.facebook.com/grove.singapore

Text & Photos: Chloe Huang



Wholesome meatless dishes

Vegans and vegetarians, do you want to have your Lion's Head and eat it too?

Now you can. Head down to Eco Harmony café in Aljunied to savour their *Braised Plant-based Meatballs* (S\$1.50 per meatball or S\$10.50 for a plate of 7 meatballs).

Dedicated to preparing hearty and healthy organic plant-based food, the social enterprise is an ideal place to visit to tickle your taste buds for meat-inspired meat-free fare that is nutritious to boot.

For the uninitiated, Lion's Head is a Chinese dish made of large stewed meatballs.

Noting the popularity of the dish in the local community, the chef at the café, Mr Wang Hao, made a meatless version with an objective in mind. He said, "I want to encourage more people to adopt veganism or vegetarianism for the benefit of environmental conservation."

Even if you are not a vegan or a vegetarian, you might be tempted to just give it a go based on the aesthetic appeal of the dish.

Each meatball sits on a purple cabbage leaf trimmed to

resemble a delicate petal and the resulting pretty purple corolla evokes the image of a lotus, while each meatball—slightly larger than a golf ball—is braised to a tantalising deep golden-brown.

Take one bite of the orb and you can't help but want to take more bites in quick succession. Made using meat substitute, constituting protein, wheat and cold-pressed coconut oil, it is crunchy on

the outside and juicy inside, and the texture is similar to that of real meatballs. The raw ingredients (S\$50 for 1.2 kg) also contain calcium ions, which is said to help build stronger bones and teeth, as well as aid in muscle contraction and blood clotting. Okinawan spinach is also added to ensure a more balanced meal, while the crisp purple cabbage delivers a burst of freshness that complements the densely packed meatball perfectly.

For fans of coconut and spices, consider the *Plant-based Curry Rendang Ayam and Turmeric (brown) Rice Set*. Akin to a *yin-yang* concept, the cooling coconut juice and pulp counter the heatiness of curry, while turmeric offers anti-inflammatory properties, among others. What's more, the set comes sprinkled with mustard seeds, which are packed with calcium, manganese, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc, protein and dietary fibre. In addition, the curry includes a variety of

vegetables, like egg plant, lady's finger and tomato, and the rice is served with a salad of purple and white cabbage, *dou miao*, carrot as well as longevity spinach (*Gynura procumbens*), harvested from Kampung Senang's organic farm in Tampines. (Kampung Senang is the parent organisation of Eco Harmony café.) This set (S\$8.50), which comes with a bowl of soup, is available at the café every Sunday.

The set meals at the café are prepared to help vegans and vegetarians meet their daily protein intake per meal, so patrons can be assured of tasty and wholesome food with every bite they take.

Ratings:
Food: 8 /10
Ambience: 7/10
Service: 7.5/10

Address:
Blk 106 Aljunied Crescent #01-205
S380106
Tel: 6749 8509

Opening Hours
11:30am – 8:30pm
(Daily except Public Holidays)

Website:
www.eco-harmony.net

Eco Harmony's Food Commitment:

- Organic
- 100% plant-based
- Cooked with heat-stable coconut oil
- Free of monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Free of artificial additives, flavours and colourings
- Can be made gluten-free, etc. Simply inform them of your dietary requirements and they will do their best to cater to your needs.



Tumeric Tea

Ingredients (Serves two to three):

- 1 stalk Lemongrass (chopped)
- 20g Ginger (sliced)
- 100ml Lime juice
- 4 tsp Turmeric powder
- 1 litre Filtered water
- To taste. Molasses sugar

Method :

1. Boil lemongrass and ginger in filtered water for 20 minutes.
2. Extract mixture without lemongrass and ginger remnants.
3. Combine mixture with lime juice, turmeric and molasses sugar.



Chai Tea

Ingredients (Serves two to three):

- 1 litre Filtered water
- 20g Black tea
- 50g Cardamom pod
- 50g Ceylon cinnamon stick
- 25g Black pepper
- 25g Cloves
- 10g Fresh ginger
- 100g Soy milk powder
- 4pcs medjool dates (pitted)

Method :

1. Mix filtered water and black tea. Then boil for 15 minutes.
2. Blend cardamom pod, Ceylon cinnamon stick, black pepper and cloves until fine for one minute. Set aside 10g to use. Remainder can be kept in fridge for future use.
3. Mix fresh ginger, dates with soy milk powder and simmer with 80°C filtered water.
4. Combine mixtures from Step 1, 2 and 3 and blend for two minutes. Serve warm.



Having a strong immune system is crucial in our day-to-day fight against viruses and bacteria. Bolster your immune system with our simple recipes.

Lemongrass contains inflammation-fighting compounds. It lowers cholesterol and prevents infection. Turmeric also contains powerful anti-inflammatory compounds and is a very strong antioxidant. Lime is known to improve immunity; ginger, too, may help to combat inflammation, besides supporting cardiovascular health and lowering the risk of cancer.

Cardamom may reduce blood pressure and blood sugar levels, has antibacterial effects, and may increase airflow to the lungs. Clove and black pepper, likewise, are potent antioxidants and cinnamon contains antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory properties.

Let's drink to everyone's good health!

Recipes courtesy of Wong Kew Yew, a vegetarian nutrition teacher who conducts classes at Awareness Hub. Call Awareness Hub at 6336 5067, or turn to page 72 for more details.

Scan this to find out more on Kew Yew's classes:



Boost Your Immune System *with* Negative Ions



Studies have shown that negative ions can have an activating influence on some body systems and cognitive performance, promote antimicrobial activity, as well as reduce depression. It can also reduce stress, regulate sleep patterns and mood, increase metabolism and boost the immune system.

If you would like to have more negative ions in your life, try out the new range of ACERA Liven ceramic water bottles, mugs and teapot sets.

Containing tourmaline to charge your water with negative ions, these eco-friendly receptacles give you the soft, pure taste of natural spring water for

all your beverages. This unique mineral also helps to neutralise harsh chlorine and other impurities while allowing the water to be more easily absorbed by your body.

The teapot set comes in three colours and designs, while the water bottle, which comes in four metallic colours, is able to keep your drinks hot or cold for six hours.

The mug set comes with a lid, so you can enjoy your favourite immunity-boosting tea anytime of the day.

Crafted with the highest quality ceramics, no plastic and metal are used in the making, except for the exterior casing of the waterbottle. They are also 100% BPA-free, PVC-free and Phthalates-free. ☺

To find out more about this collection, please call Awareness Place stores at 6337 7582 or 6452 1732.



Scan this to watch the benefit of drinking from Liven mugs

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Are you touched by the stories and interviews featured in this magazine?

Perhaps you too have a story to tell, a story of how the Buddha and His Teachings so inspired you to walk the Buddhist path, or maybe a simple account of the little treasures and blessings in life? Or perhaps you are a budding poet who would like to share a prose and a verse or two about how the Dharma changed your life forever?

Whatever your story or poem may be, we welcome you to write in to us. Share your inspiring tale of faith and awakening with the rest of the world. Send your entries to awaken@kmspks.org or:

AWAKEN, The Executive Editor
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
Dharma Propagation Division
88 Bright Hill Road Singapore 574117

Please include your full name, address and contact details. We reserve the right to edit the stories and letters for space and grammar considerations.

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Issue 47 / May 2020

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YOUR Feedback Matters

We value your comments and welcome your suggestions for improvements to AWAKEN. Tell us how we can improve our magazine to better cater to your spiritual and holistic needs. What new column would you like to see; which articles would you like to read? Send us your praises and flames. E-mail your feedback to awaken@kmspks.org or send them to:

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You may send your resume to: hrdept@kmspks.org OR drop by our HR Office @ 88 Bright Hill Road, Singapore 574117 between 9am to 4.30pm (Mon-Fri), except public holidays.

Alternatively, you may log onto: www.kmspks.org/career to view our job vacancies.

VIRUS (2019)

Directed by: Aashiq Abu

Starring: Kunchacko Boban, Parvathy Thiruvothu, Asif Ali, Tovino Thomas



Based on a true story, at the outset of this Malayalam movie set in South India, we witness a normal, busy day inside the Kozhikode Medical College's casualty department. People are streaming in with various ailments, doctors are administering their advice and nurses are applying treatment of varying natures.

One such patient, Zachariah, is a young fellow in his twenties. Admitted to the hospital for fever and acute vomiting, his condition is now worsening. One nurse in particular takes on his case, checking his vital signs and accompanying him along the corridor to the radiology department. As he's wheeled there on a hospital gurney, he suffers more vomiting. At this point, we suspect that he has 'the virus' associated with the title of the movie, but we do not actually know yet that he is whom they will eventually refer to as the 'index patient', the one who started its spread.

Later, when the group investigating the flow of the disease examines the CCTV footage of that day in the hospital corridor filled with other patients and people who are accompanying them, we will see that a number of those bystanders fell victim to the disease shortly afterwards.

When Zachariah quickly dies from the fever and others, who are young and seemingly healthy, including the nurse who attended to him, succumb to these symptoms too, the medical establishment suspects

that something serious is going on. Connecting the dots that this must be a contagious virus, they gather samples and match them with probable diseases. A senior virologist finally deduces that these cases are caused by the Nipah virus, a highly infectious virus with a 75-80% mortality rate, mostly found in countries of South East Asia, often originating from specific types of fruit bats.

The Health Minister, C.K. Prameela, a calm and cool-headed lady gathers a team of medical advisors and staff around her to act swiftly to contain the disease, laying out the first step to locate and create a map of each and every person that the victims have connected with in the last few days and weeks, to deduce from whom they may have contracted the disease, quarantine others who had been in contact with them and hence stop its spread.

But another question enters at this stage when it's suggested that the disease may also be a bio-weapon initiated by another country or an individual terrorist group. If the team cannot prove that each and every person who has caught the disease has contracted it directly or indirectly from the same index patient, they'll have to hand the situation over to the Defence department, who will take the matter to another

level. Over the coming days, working swiftly and critically in a detective-like way, the team knows they have no option but to get to the bottom of this, in order to contain it most effectively.

Patients are isolated in a special unit and looked after with the utmost care by doctors and their assistants, who work around the clock in protective gear from top to toe. They too must stay in quarantine, away from their families, in a special hostel zone. Although members of the medical team experience normal emotional states of fear and doubt towards the situation, they push on regardless, working calmly and with a sense of purpose, showing extreme courage in tackling all issues, notwithstanding the fact that they even have to create makeshift pyres to burn the dead, when the electric crematorium fails to work properly.

From start to finish, the movie is a fabulous take on our good human qualities: people genuinely caring about one another, going above and beyond the call of duty to provide support for each other at a time of crisis, displaying uncommon levels of selflessness whilst involved in the day-to-day processing of the situation. As the Health Minister says in her speech at the end, "We fought hand-in-hand to get here... in this saga, all of them contracted with this malady while trying to help out somebody else. At the same time, the same kindness was instrumental in our victory over this tragedy." ☺

Displaying the best of humanity—selflessness, kindness and love in times of crises Text: Susan Griffith-Jones

SEEN

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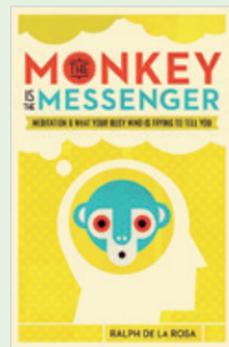
Befriending your monkey mind as practice Text: Esther Thien



Radically Happy - A User's Guide to the Mind

By Phakchok Rinpoche & Eric Solomon
S\$29.50

Radically Happy is a beautifully-designed, visually-nourishing full-colour book marrying Phakchok Rinpoche's deep understanding of ancient wisdom with Eric Solomon's experience in the technology-driven modern world. Comprising 228 pages, this book offers a user's guide with exercises and principles for the mind to learn how to be radically happy, and attain a sense of well-being that we can access anytime but especially when life is challenging. It is not meant to be theoretical but to change how we relate to our thoughts and emotions to focus more on the present moment, allowing us to have a direct experience of deep wisdom, inner peace and nurturing support.



The Monkey Is The Messenger

By Ralph De la Rosa
S\$32.90

The Monkey is the Messenger is a bright mustard-coloured book that is as poignant as it is entertaining. It offers a range of evidence-based somatic and trauma-informed insights and practices drawn from therapist De La Rosa's study of neuroscience and psychology, and his long practice of meditation and yoga, to help one develop self-love and understanding. It's an approach to living that acknowledges that just about every situation in life can either lead us to clarity and satisfaction, or confusion and misery. The difference lies not in our circumstances but in our attitude towards them. Or what De La Rosa called "taking responsibility for our own happiness". Like *Inviting a Monkey to Tea*, this book also gives us useful techniques to reframe the parts of us we'd rather avoid.



Inviting a Monkey to Tea: Befriending your mind and discovering lasting contentment

By Nancy Colier
S\$27.90

In Buddhism, it is said that the human mind is like a monkey in a cage that has drunk a bottle of wine and been stung by a bee. We all have one of these monkeys, with their own quirks, babbling on with or without our permission ceaselessly. The problem is not that we have the monkey but that we believe we are the monkey. To know *who we really are*, we must move beyond the monkey mind. When we invite our monkey to tea, it is with a friendly and open heart; we re-identify with that presence as the larger awareness, which is big enough to house even this wild creature called mind. In this book, we learn how to befriend and accept ourselves, developing a caring and inclusive relationship with our mind and the mind of the universe.

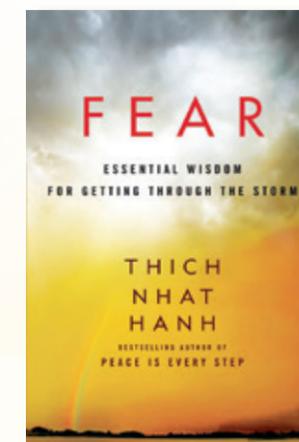
All books are available at Awareness Place stores.



The Zen of R2-D2

By Matthew Bortolin
S\$19

The Zen of R2-D2 is a refreshingly delightful read that is humorous yet showcases timeless wisdom as projected through the spirituality in Star Wars, in the form of a fictional dialogue between the author and two cosplayers dressed as C-3PO and R2-D2. There is even a section on Zen parables for the would-be Jedi! One particularly memorable quote from the book, said in true Zen fashion: "Life may sometimes be hard. You may make mistakes you regret. But every moment, every experience, every feeling is the entire universe in disguise. The awakened mind sees its totality and celebrates it all like it is complete victory."



Fear: Essential Wisdom for Getting Through the Storm

Harper Collins
\$12.11

Fear is a destructive, pervasive problem we all face. Written by Vietnamese Buddhist Zen Master, poet, scholar, peace activist and foremost spiritual leader, Thich Nhat Hanh, this is a powerful and practical guide to overcoming our debilitating uncertainties and personal terrors. It explores the origins of our fears, illuminating a path to finding peace and freedom from anxiety and offering effective tools to help us eradicate it from our lives. It teaches us that instead of evading fear, the only way to ease it and be truly happy is to acknowledge our fear and look deeply at its source with awareness and clarity. An interesting and useful book that anyone should have in his or her personal library. Also available in audiobook version.

Available on Google Play and Apple Store.



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Connecting you to the wisdom of the Dharma 24/7 Text: Esther Thien

Dharma Apps

Calendar of Events 2020

05 May ▶ 08 Aug



DHARMA

• CEREMONY | PRAYERS

Ullambana Prayer
(conducted in Mandarin)
Registration : 5 July Sun onwards till fully registered
Mass offering : \$50 (outdoor) | \$100 (air-con) | \$280 (individual table)
Enquiry : 6849 5333



Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Prayer
(conducted in Mandarin)
19 – 27 Aug | 8pm – 9.30pm
Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

Diamond Sutra Prayer
Every Sun | 2pm | Hall of Great Compassion

Pureland Group Practice
Every Sun | 9.30am | Hall of Great Compassion

Medicine Buddha Sutra Praye
Every Sat | 7.30pm | Hall of Great Compassion

The Great Compassion Prayer
Every 27th of lunar month | 10am | Hall of Great Compassion

The Great Compassion Prayer @ Guanyin Dan
19th of sixth and ninth lunar months
10am | Hall of Great Compassion
Free Admission

• TALKS | WORKSHOPS | COURSES



English Buddhism Course Year 1 | By Venerable
12 Feb – 21 Oct | Wed | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Fee: \$110 for full year (3 modules)

English Buddhism Course Year 2 | By Venerable
17 Feb – 19 Oct | Mon | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Fee: \$110 for full year (3 modules)

English Buddhism Course Year 3 | By Venerable
20 Feb – 29 Oct | Thur | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Fee: \$110 for full year (3 modules)

Registration:
1. Online: www.kmspks.org/Dharma
2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm
(Closes for lunch : 11.30am – 12.30pm)
Enquiry: 6849 5300 | 6849 5345 | ded@kmspks.org

Due to the current Covid-19 situation, programmes and dates are subject to change. Please visit www.kmspks.org for up-to-date information.

• TOUR



KMSPKS Guided Tour
Join us on a guided tour around KMSPKS and learn more about Buddhism, its history and art.
26 Jun & 26 Jul | Sun | 10am – 12pm
Venue: KMSPKS
Free Admission

Registration:
1. Online: www.kmspks.org
2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm
(Closes for lunch : 11.30am – 12.30pm)
3. Enquiry: 6849 5300 | guidedtour@kmspks.org



LIFESTYLE

• CHILDREN

Health Seminar 'Secrets of Children's Health'
Why kids can't pay attention in class?
Are they sick often, have sensitive skin or are hyperactive?
Facilitate the development of children through Environment, Lifestyle and Diet
20 May | Wed | 2pm – 4pm
Organised by: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$40
* Online on ZOOM

Children's Art – Colours of Life
This programme encourages free expression, reflection and art exploration to appreciate beauty in objects and the environment. For children aged 4 to 12.
25 Aug – 24 Oct | Sat | 1.30pm – 3pm
25 Aug – 24 Oct | Sat | 3pm – 4.30pm
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$60 (10 sessions) excluding art materials

• ART



Western Floral Arrangement and Hand Bouquet (I)
Participants will learn: 3 different geometric designs and 3 lessons on basic hand bouquet styles
19 Jun – 24 Jul | Fri | 7pm – 9pm
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$120 (6 sessions)
Material Fee: \$30 (per session, payable to instructor)

Pastel Nagomi Art – The Little Prince's Imaginative World
Arouse the Little Prince hidden in you and re-discover a world of imagination and creativity! Inspired by French literature, Le Petit Prince, facilitator Sarana integrates pastel art painting and activities to stimulate your creativity and imagination.
Participants will also get a chance to create their very own personalised pen holders.
28 Jun | Sun | 10am – 5pm (1hr lunch break on own)
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$155
Material Fee: \$45 starter-kit for new students (payable to instructor)



Zentangle Series - Tangling on Fabric (draw string bags and pouches)
Personalise your bag with tangled patterns!
Suitable for both beginners and advanced level tangles.
2 Aug | Sun | 2pm – 5pm
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$70
Material Fee: \$18 for beginners / \$8 for those with own basic kit (payable to instructor)

Venue: Awareness Hub (#03-39 Bras Basah Complex)
Registration:
1. Online: www.kmspks.org
2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm
(Closes for lunch : 11.30am – 12.30pm)
3. Awareness Hub 11.30am – 6pm
Enquiry: 63365067 | awarenesshub@kmspks.org

• WELLNESS



Lunch-time Hatha Yoga
2 Jun – 4 Aug | Tue | 12.20pm – 1.10pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$140 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$18 per lesson

Gentle Hatha Yoga
2 Jun – 4 Aug | Tue | 2.30pm – 4pm
3 Jul – 11 Sep (except 31 July) | Fri | 2.30pm – 4pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$160 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$22 per lesson

Hatha Yoga for Beginners
13 Jun – 15 Aug | Sat | 6.30pm – 8pm
22 Aug – 24 Oct | Sat | 6.30pm – 8pm
19 Jun – 28 Aug (except 31 July) | Fri | 10.30am – 12pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$180 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$25 per lesson

Chair Yoga
3 Jul – 11 Sep (except 31 July)
Fri | 12.30pm – 1.30pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$160 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$22 per lesson

Yin Yoga
Learn to improve flexibility and mental focus while relieving stress and anxiety.
14 Jul – 15 Sep | Tue | 6.30pm – 7.45pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$170 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$23 per lesson

Venue: Awareness Hub (#03-39 Bras Basah Complex)
Registration:
1. Online: www.kmspks.org
2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm
(Closes for lunch : 11.30am – 12.30pm)
3. Awareness Hub 11.30am – 6pm
Enquiry: 63365067 | awarenesshub@kmspks.org

Hatha Yoga
29 Jul – 30 Sep | Wed | 6.45pm – 7.45pm
29 Jul – 30 Sep | Wed | 8pm – 9pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$160 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$22 per lesson

Hatha Yoga
4 Aug – 6 Oct | Tue | 10.30am – 12pm
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$180 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$25 per lesson



Yoga for Diabetes
Learn yoga postures that stimulate insulin production to help manage diabetes. For non-diabetics this gentle yoga boosts immunity.
6 Aug – 8 Oct | Thu | 10.30am – 11.30am
Venue : Awareness Hub
Fee: \$120 (10 sessions) – Walk-in \$15 per lesson



Mindfulness Foundation
The course brings you through mindfulness techniques to help you focus better and worry less.
4 Sep – 25 Sep | Fri | 7.30pm – 9.30pm
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$160 (4 sessions)



Rhythm Rejuvenation 'Self-Love for Recovery'
HealthRHYTHMS® is a fun, evidence-based whole person strategy promoting holistic wellbeing. The drum is used as a tool for communication, stress reduction, self-expression and empowerment. (No prior musical experience needed! Instruments will be provided)
19 Jul | Sun | 3pm – 5pm
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$30



Nutrition for Digestive Health
27 Jul | Mon | 10am – 4pm
29 Jul | Wed | 10am – 4pm
Venue: Awareness Hub
Fee: \$300

Venue: Awareness Hub (#03-39 Bras Basah Complex)
Registration:
1. Online: www.kmspks.org/lifestyle/
2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm
(Closes for lunch : 11.30am – 12.30pm)
3. Awareness Hub 11.30am – 6pm
Enquiry: 6336 5067 | awarenesshub@kmspks.org

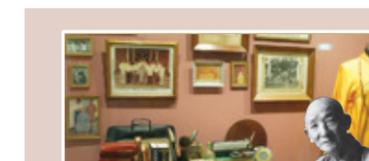
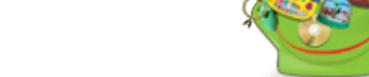
• ENVIRONMENTALISM

Sorting of Recyclables @ Gratitude Corner
Assist us in sorting out items that can be recycled and reused for sale at the Gratitude shop.
Every Tue, Thu, Sat | 9am – 2pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Outside South Wing Office

Gratitude Shop
Check out our thrift shop for cheap and good deals. Garden Compost is also up for sale!
Mon – Sun | 10am – 3pm
Venue: Outside Dining Hall (South Wing)



Mobile Kiosk
6, 7 & 19 May | Wed, Thur & Tue | 9am – 1.30pm
18 Jun | Thur | 9am – 1.30pm
17 Jul | Fri | 9am – 1.30pm
16 Aug | Sun | 9am – 1.30pm
Venue: Corridor between Dining Hall & Front Office
Enquiry: 6849 5300
gratitude@kmspks.org



• COMMUNITY



Community Tuition
Free academic coaching for Secondary school English, Maths, Physics and Chemistry.
9 Feb – 25 Oct | Sun | 9am – 4pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 3 | Classroom
Enquiry: 6849 5300 | community@kmspks.org



Blood Donation Drive
Join us at our blood donation drive — just 60 minutes of your time today to save lives tomorrow.
17 May | Sun | 9am – 3pm
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry: 6849 5300 | community@kmspks.org

Note
• To check for eligibility, please visit website: hsa.gov.sg/blood-donation/can-i-donate
• Strictly by appointment only. Please call 6220 0183 to make an appointment with Red Cross today.



Basic Training Course (Compulsory for New Volunteers)
25 July | Sat | 8am – 5.30pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Registration & Enquiry:
6849 5318 | volunteer@kmspks.org



Ven Hong Choon Museum
10am - 3pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 3
Free Admission
On:
27th of each lunar month
Qing Ming (4 Apr)
Vesak Day (7 May)
Ullambana Festival (2 Sep)
Birth anniversary of Ven Hong Choon (19 Oct)
Death anniversary of Ven Hong Choon (23 Dec)

KMSPKS = Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
VHCMH = Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Programmes & venues are subject to change. Details are correct at the time of printing.

Like us on [facebook.com/kmspks](https://www.facebook.com/kmspks)

1 Be mindful of anxiety as a phenomena affecting body and mind.

Don't fight it or indulge it. See anxious thoughts as simply thoughts, like clouds passing through the sky of the mind. See physical sensations as merely sensations, and part of nature. Breathe deeply. Imagine the anxiety leaving the body with the out-breath. Imagine calm and clarity entering the body and mind with the in-breath.

2 Develop mindfulness of the urge to touch the face, and endure through it

(Remembering how it feels when the impulse passes away is a help in resisting it the next time)

Be mindful while washing your hands for 20 seconds.

For example, try reciting inwardly: 1—*Buddho*, 2—*Buddho*, 3—*Buddho*, 4—*Buddho*, 5—*Buddho*...up to 10—*Buddho*, then reverse count back to zero.

Be mindful of the distance between you and others.

3 Develop mindfulness as an inner refuge by daily periods of chanting and meditation.

Chanting Pali verses with full attention is calming. Chanting in translation brings to mind important reflections that are uplifting and wise. Meditation helps to create a quiet oasis of inner calm amid all the confusion of daily life.

4 Be mindful of children's fears.

Explain the virus to them as you can, encourage them to ask questions. Let them know that their safety is your first concern. Beware of your speech concerning the virus in their presence.

5 Be mindful of your use of social media.

Restrict your consumption of news. Catching up once or twice a day is sufficient. Avoid unreliable social media that stir up fears or are full of miracle cures. (This will be much easier if you observe how your mental state is affected by what you look at on your screen.) If you have children, ensure that they are similarly restrained.

6 Be mindful of the suffering of others.

Don't be reckless. Don't be selfish in your use of precious resources. Get together with like-minded friends and offer assistance to any elderly people at risk or children going hungry.

7 Be mindful of this opportunity to spend some quality time with your family. ☺

Mindfulness Exercises For The Pandemic

By Ajahn Jayasaro