

# 普觉awaken



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正确理解佛教的放生

网瘾与色味

虎溪三笑的由来与启示

在与其他宗教徒相处时，应当求同存异，相互理解，相互包容，与人建立起一种和谐共存的亲密关系。

**Cultivating Emotional Balance Through Mindfulness**

Venerables Ton Nghiem, Phap Hai, Phap Kham, Hoc Nghiem and Phap Tinh, disciples of renowned Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh discuss emotional balance in Buddhist practice

**More Thought Training Meditations**

**The Secret of the Buddha's Smile**

*The Art of Living Happily in the Here & Now*



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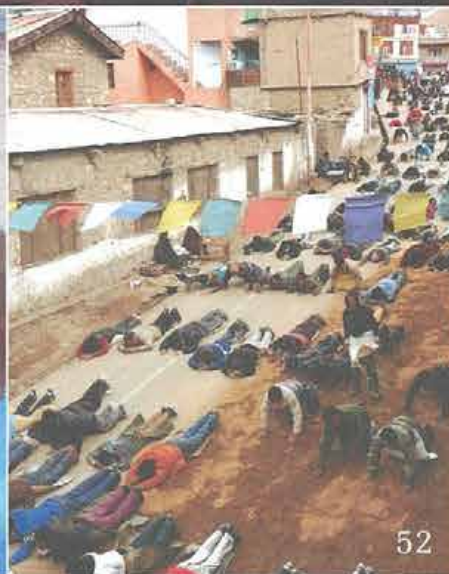




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To find out more, visit [www.awarenessplace.com](http://www.awarenessplace.com) or call 6336 5067 (11.30am – 6.00pm Daily. Closed on Public Holidays)



## Editor's Note

Being a mother of two lovable kids, I remember the dismay I felt when I read in the papers, not too long ago, of how two young mothers caused the death of their own babies. One starved her newborn to death as she became obsessed with raising a virtual infant with her husband. The other, a 22-year-old mother from Florida shook her three-month-old son to death after his crying interrupted her Farmville game.

Closer to home, news of disenchanted, disconnected Singaporean youths who went on a slashing spree that resulted in senseless bloodshed and death shocked the nation. If the parties involved had greater emotional awareness or knew the tools to develop emotional balance, perhaps these regrettable, tragic episodes would have been avoided.

Many of us are not experiencing happiness in the present moment, says Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Most people run to the future in a constant search for what, who and where that will make them happy (pg 44). Actually, many conditions for our happiness are already available in the present. Living deeply with mindfulness every single moment of our life allows us to touch and experience those refreshing, healing elements inside and around us (pg 54).

The energy of mindfulness also enables us to recognise the pain, sorrow, fear and anger that are inside of us. Mindfulness lets us become strong enough to gently embrace our pain and suffering so we can look deeply, understand and transform them. We no longer need to use consumption to cover up or run away from our suffering.

Recognising that we are all interconnected (pg 41), we understand that genuine happiness stems not from what we get from the world but from what we bring to it, and that such well-being, unlike hedonic pleasures, can never be taken away (pg 38).

We learn to be mindful of our consumption, online and off (pg 40), and to give our true presence to our loved ones. If we see that someone is creating difficulty or suffering for us, or that we are faced with a situation where we feel uncomfortable or angry, we come back, follow our breath and look at ourselves (pg 45).

Realising that the mind is the root cause for all our suffering (pg 58) and that many of our negative actions are reactions to feelings (pg 63 & 59), we train ourselves through meditation (pg 42) and contemplation (pg 50 & 60) to develop right view about the true nature of life (pg 36).

Cultivating in this way, we are able to recognise an impulse as it arises. With this ability to 'see', we water the seeds that nurture our happiness and others', and avoid acting on impulses that lead to negative results. And this is wisdom, says Dr Alan Wallace.

For more mind-training tools, read pages 52 and 62.

May your New Year be blessed with a heightened emotional awareness and a deeper insight into the true nature of life.



Yours in the Dharma,  
Sister Esther Thien



### Y.talk

A lifestyle sharing programme for young professionals to relax and discover Buddhism and its relevance in daily life.

Date/Time : Every 2nd and 4th Thurs of the month,  
7.30pm – 9.30pm

Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5346 or email ytalk@kmspks.org

### Zen Drum Class 2011 Intake (Module 1)

Date/Time : Starts 15 Jan, Sat, 2pm – 4pm

Venue : Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Fee : \$210 (15 sessions, max 20 pax)

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5359 or email arts@kmspks.org

### Basic Vipassana (Insight) Meditation Class

Date/Time : 22 Feb – 3 May, Tue, 8.00pm – 9.30pm

Venue : 4th floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

Offering : \$30

For more information, please call 6849 5300 or visit www.kmspks.org

### Buddhist Art Therapy\*

Date/Time : 4 Jan – 1 Mar, Tue, 7.30pm – 9pm

Fee : \$200 (8 sessions includes drawing, painting & sculpture-making materials, max 12 pax @ only)

Instructor : Ms. Yen Chua, certified Art Therapist, Masters Degrees in Arts & Art Therapy. She is also an award winning and practising local artist who has held several solo and group exhibitions.

### Happy Valentine's Art Workshop\*

Date/Time : 13 Feb, Sun, 3pm – 6pm

Fee : \$35 per pax (small group)

Instructor : Ms. Yen Chua

### Vegetarian Cooking (English)\*

Date/Time : 20 & 27 Feb, Sun, 3pm – 5pm

Fee : \$30 (2 sessions) + \$6 ingredients fee

Instructor : Mr. Wong Kew Yew

### Organic Educational Tour (Mandarin)\*

Date/Time : 19 Mar, Sat, 8am – 6pm

Fee : \$65 (inclusive of 3 organic meals)

Instructor : Mr. Wong Kew Yew

### Simple Detox Workshop (English)\*

Date/Time : 22 Apr, Fri, 8.30am – 5pm

Fee : \$80 (1 full day)

Instructor : Mr. Wong Kew Yew, Bach, Biotech, dedicated to public education including interviews and cooking demos on Radio FM 95.8

### Yoga for General\*

Date/Time : (1) 19 Feb – 23 Apr, Sat, 9.15am – 10.45am

(2) 4 Apr – 27 Jun, Mon, 7.30pm – 9pm

Fee : \$160 (10 lessons)

Instructor : Ms. Helen Goh, certified Yoga Instructor

### Yoga Workshop for Stress Management\*

Date/Time : 16 Jan, Sun, 3pm – 5pm

Fee : \$30

Instructor : Ms. Ong Ju Lee, diploma in teaching the Science and Art of Yoga

### Lunch-time Yoga\*

Date/Time : (1) 1 Mar – 3 May, Tue, 12.30pm – 1.10pm /  
1.10pm – 1.50pm

(2) 3 Mar – 5 May, Thurs, 12.45pm – 1.25pm

Fee : \$140 (10 sessions with 1 free organic take-away every session)

Instructor : Ms. Ong Ju Lee

### Yoga for General\*

Date/Time : (1) 1 Mar – 3 May, Tue, 10.30am – 12pm

(2) 23 Feb – 27 Apr, Wed, 7.30pm – 9pm

Fee : \$160 (10 lessons)

Instructor : Ms. Ong Ju Lee

### Afternoon Yoga for Golden Years\*

Date/Time : 1 Mar – 3 May, Tue, 3pm – 4.30pm

Fee : \$120 (10 lessons)

Instructor : Ms. Ong Ju Lee

### Metta Meditation (Mandarin)\*

Date/Time : 6, 13, 20 & 27 Mar, Sun, 3pm – 4.30pm

Fee : \$30 (4 lessons)

Instructor : Venerable Chuan Ren

### Project Rebirth: Rediscover, Reflect, Recharge\*

Date/Time : 8 Mar – 10 May, Tue, 7.30pm–9.30pm

Fee : \$30 (10 sessions)

Instructor : Shen Shi'an, MA (Buddhist Studies)

\* Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre,  
Bras Basah Complex #03-39

Details : Please visit [www.awarenessplace.com](http://www.awarenessplace.com),  
email [sem@kmspks.org](mailto:sem@kmspks.org) or call 6336 5067 to register or enquire.

### Marriage Builder with an "S" Factor (Buddhist Pre-Marriage Workshop)

Date/Time : 18, 25 Feb & 4 Mar, Fri, 7.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

Fee : \$99 per couple

Max 30pax (first-come, first-served basis)

For more information, please call 6849 5300 or visit [www.kmspks.org](http://www.kmspks.org)

### English Buddhism Course

#### Year 1 Module 1

Date/Time : 21 Feb – 25 Apr, Mon, 7.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

#### Year 2 Module 1

Date/Time : 20 Feb – 24 Apr, Sun, 2.00pm – 3.30pm

Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

#### Sutra Discussion Module 1

Date/Time : 24 Feb – 21 Apr 2011, Thurs, 7.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

Fee : \$30 per Module

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300

### Medicine Buddha Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every Sat, 7.45pm

Venue : 2nd Level, Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas

### Pureland Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every Sun, 9.00am

Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

### Diamond Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every Sun, 2.00pm

Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

### The Great Compassion Puja (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every 27th of the lunar month, 10.00am

Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

### Recitation of 25th Chapter of the Lotus Sutra (Pu Men Pin)

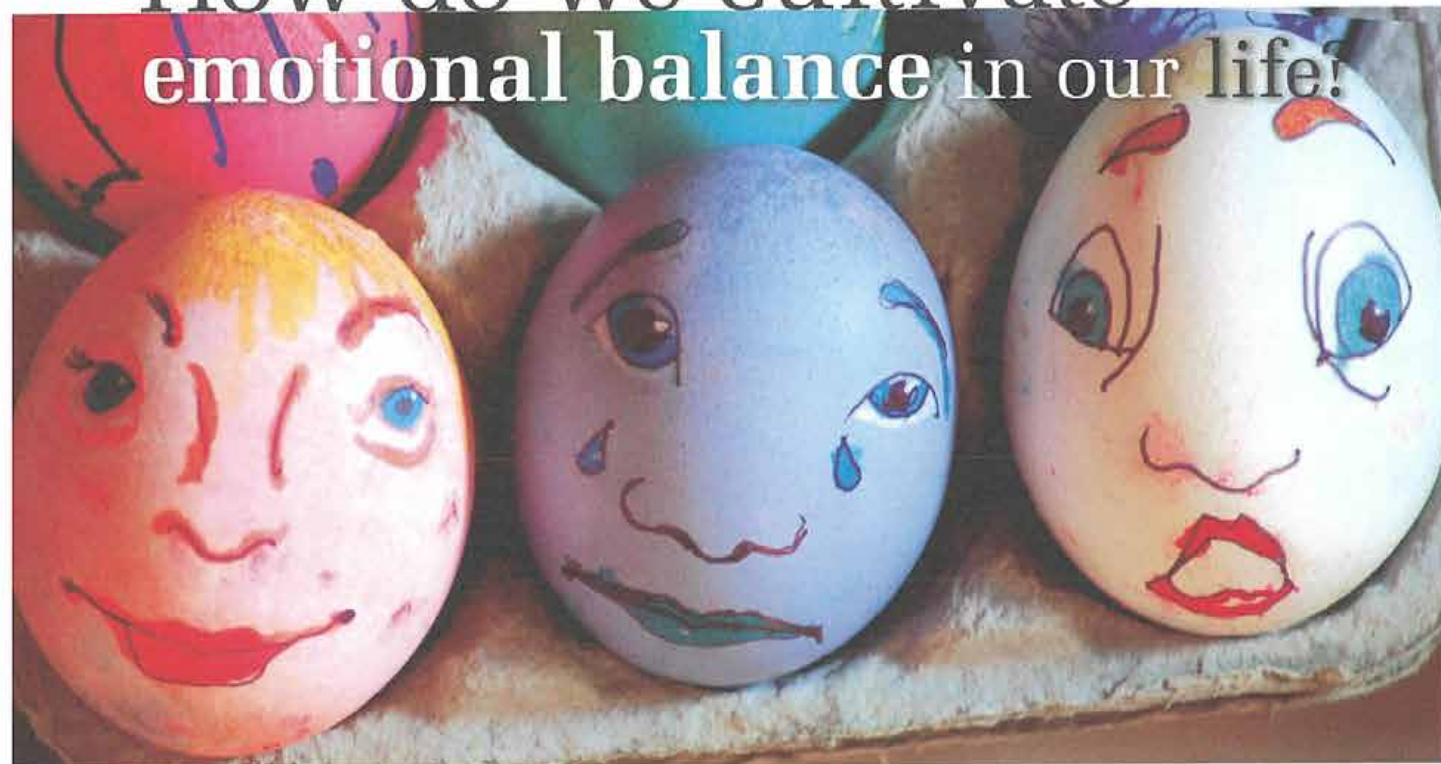
Date/Time : Every Fri, 8.00pm

Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300



# How do we cultivate emotional balance in our life?



**Q** : How can we cultivate emotional balance in our life? What do we do when people are rude and disrespectful, or cheat and do nasty things to us?

— Anonymous

**A** : ‘Balance’ necessitates that we have a big view. If we evaluate and interpret things and people in terms of only how they affect or relate to us as if we are the centre of the universe, then our mind will be imbalanced. As long as we have seeds of clinging, hatred, anger, competition etc in us, we will continue to react in an imbalanced manner, judging and placing people in the position of a friend, an enemy or a neutral person. And yet we think they behave so objectively from their own side.

---

As long as we have a discriminating mind that gets attached to some people and pushes away others, everywhere we go, we are going to be in conflict with people, simply because our minds are going to grasp, hate or be jealous at someone or something.

---

To become emotionally balanced, the first step is to realise how imbalanced we are and that the imbalance is coming from ourselves, not from an external party. If we look into everybody’s heart, we will realise that equally everyone wants to be happy and be free from suffering, whether they are our beloved or our enemies. So we see, how we view the world depends on our minds and we have to retrain our minds to see the world in a more accurate way. To become balanced emotionally, we have to realise how imbalanced and biased we are and to retrain our minds to see living beings in a different way. This takes constant practice but it’s a beautiful practice that we can do anywhere, anytime with anybody.

Realising that every being only wants to be happy and be free from suffering, just like ourselves, opens up our heart to others. We may not be able to eliminate all their suffering, or make them completely happy but at least we respect them as living beings. And often respect is worth more to others than any physical thing we can give to them. A student once told me an



experience he had when he went to California. He saw a woman begging on the street and he went up and offered a dollar to her very respectfully looking at her in the eye and said, "This is all I can give you now. But I really wish you well." The woman started to cry, because just having someone saying "I wish you well; I care about you," is worth more to her than the dollar that he gave. So sometimes just having the heart connection with somebody could be an incredible gift to others. And we can have heart connections with total strangers when our minds are well-trained in this attitude that just like me, everybody is alike in wanting to be happy and free from suffering. Then wherever we are and whoever we are with, we can connect with them on a heart level and spontaneously show them the respect that acknowledges their humanity of wanting happiness and not pain and suffering.

Compassion is the antidote or panacea to low self-esteem and our emotional distress. As we move away from our own self-centred focus on our problems, of how things don't go the way we want

them, and turn our mind towards reflecting on the suffering that other beings are going through, and of connecting with others on a heart-to-heart level, our own emotional state becomes more peaceful as we see things in a more balanced way.

When people are rude, disrespectful or push blame, it is helpful to remember that what others say are only a reflection and creation of their own thoughts. It doesn't mean what they said actually truly reflect who I am.

Also see that the people who did nasty things, or perpetrate harm to others are in actual fact in a state of great confusion and suffering. Still we can speak out, let them know with an attitude of kindness and compassion, to prevent them from committing further unwholesome acts.

— Ven. Thubten Chodron  
[www.thubtenchodron.org](http://www.thubtenchodron.org)  
[www.sravasti.org](http://www.sravasti.org)


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"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion... If there is any religion that would cope with scientific needs, it would be Buddhism." - Albert Einstein

For more information on Buddhist activities for youth, please visit [www.buddhism.org/youth](http://www.buddhism.org/youth)

## AWAKEN to...

*Compassion & Wisdom on the journey of life...*

Published three times a year by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, AWAKEN is a FREE bilingual Buddhist magazine that aims to help readers gain insight and make sense of life's journey using the Dharma.



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# Singapore Buddhists Learned the Ways to Develop Emotional Balance at Symposium

BY | Esther Thien

**Singapore** – More than a thousand local Buddhists had an enriching time when the *Buddhism and Science Symposium II* was held last July at the Suntec Convention Centre. Co-organised by the Buddhist Library, Poh Ming Tse Temple, Khooon Chee Vihara and Ean Keng Si Buddhist Temple, the symposium focused on *Emotional Awareness: Cultivating Mental Balance and Leading a Good Life*.

It invited eminent Buddhist scholars Ven. (Dr.) Jing Yin, Dr. Alan Wallace, and renowned psychologist and pioneer scientist in the research of emotions and their relation to facial expressions, Dr. Paul Ekman.

The speakers led a rousing discussion, laced with witticism. Drawing on the philosophy and practices of Buddhism, each presented different techniques and facets of dealing with an individual's emotional turbulence in order to cultivate inner resilience.

According to Ven. (Dr.) Jing Yin, Director of the Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong, our negative emotions stem from the fact that “what we have we do not want; what we want we cannot have”. Since our mind is the root cause, cultivating right view about the true nature of life through meditation is one way. “Buddhist meditation is about transforming the mind through mental training. If you allow your external environment or conditions to dictate your mind, then you are an ordinary being. Your mental and emotional state will be severely affected or influenced by the external conditions of your environment. But if you develop the strength of mind to transcend over your conditions, you are a holy person,” elaborated the Venerable.

For Dr. Alan Wallace, Founding President of the Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies, our emotional imbalance comes from the way we operate in a hunter-gatherer mode. “We go out into the world as if we have no inner resources, constantly searching for what, who and where will make us happy,” said Dr. Wallace. But hedonic mundane pleasures are not genuine happiness as they are stimulus-driven,



he continued. “Take away the stimulus and the pleasure is gone,” explained Dr. Wallace. Genuine happiness stems not from

what we get from the world but from what we bring to it. In contrast, a cultivator's approach gives us a sense of well-being that cannot be taken away from us. “By cultivating our own mind through developing conscious attention, we are able to recognise an impulse as it arises. With this ability to ‘see’, we act on impulses that nurture and support ours and others’ happiness, and refrain from acting on impulses that lead to negative results. And this is wisdom.”

The last speaker, Dr Paul Ekman, Professor Emeritus at the University of California at San Francisco, presented his speech in a pre-recorded video clip. Unable to attend in person due to ill health, Dr Ekman highlighted the need to develop conscious attention or awareness of our emotions so as to bring about emotional balance. According to Dr Ekman, cultivating two kinds of awareness will help: impulse awareness and behavioural awareness. Impulse awareness is defined as having conscious attention to the emotions as they arise and becoming aware of what arises in the mind and the impulse before the action. On the other hand, keeping a journal of regrettable emotional episodes and writing down a list of things that trigger our emotions and their respective reactions would help us to establish behavioural awareness, thus allowing us to see their causal connections.

Since “suffering and hardship arise and are dependent on how an individual interprets a situation and reacts or responds to it,” the speakers agreed that developing a steady stable awareness of the body, feelings, mind and its mental objects would give rise to calm insight and emotional balance. ☸



# KMSPKS Youth Launches **Y.care** To Nurture Spiritual Friendship

BY | Ming Yang



**Singapore** – As practising Buddhists, many of us have yet to give up the pleasures of the world, though we strive to lessen our reliance on them.

But even as we take in the sights and sounds, we wish to keep walking in the direction of personal growth and self-realisation. Keeping us company along this path are our spiritual friends — fellow Buddhists with whom there is an unspoken commitment to support each other to keep moving forward in the right direction.

One way to nurture this spiritual friendship is to get together with fellow Buddhists to do community service. Besides contributing to a meaningful cause, it allows for lively banter in a relaxed environment and the opportunity to get to know each other better. Now Buddhist youths will get an avenue to do this through *Y.care*, a community outreach programme launched last November by KMSPKS Youth.

To start off, *Y.care* is organising regular “kopitiam” and supermarket outings for the residents of Bright Hill Evergreen Home (BHEH), a nursing home for the elderly who are either without family support

or from low-income families. With many of the residents wheelchair-bound, getting out of the home for some fresh air in the neighbourhood is a small luxury that can help lift their spirits. With the upcoming festive season, an outing to see the festive light-up in Chinatown to soak in the Chinese New Year atmosphere is also planned.

Besides BHEH, *Y.care* will also take on worthwhile community service projects for other organisations, as well as overseas humanitarian missions to help the poor and marginalised communities in the region.



To carry out these projects, KMSPKS Youth is now recruiting volunteers aged 17 to 35. If you wish to put Dharma into action to benefit the less fortunate and engage like-minded Buddhist peers, sign up now! To receive regular updates on upcoming *Y.care* activities and other KMSPKS Youth programmes, please email [youth@kmspks.com](mailto:youth@kmspks.com) for more information. 🙏



Eat your way to good health this Lunar New Year with our recipes containing cabbage and corn. A rich source of many essential vitamins like vitamin A, C, D, K and B6, cabbage and corn also contain significant amounts of carotenoids, antioxidants, dietary fibre and minerals. Studies show that the healthful nutrients in cabbage and corn are effective in preventing cancers and heart ailments. They are said to help protect against diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and high blood cholesterol level too.

### Sweet Corn & Water Chestnut 椰汁粟米马蹄露



Photos: © Anuttara Enterprises Pte Ltd

#### Ingredients:

Mashed corn kernels 1 can, sugar 200g, water chestnut 300g, grated coconut 1, corn flour 4 tbsp (mix well with 4 tbsp of water)

#### Method:

1. Skin and crush the water chestnuts
2. Add 3tbsp of water to coconut to extract coconut milk.
3. Pour the mashed corn kernels into 3 bowls of water, add the crushed water chestnut and sugar. Bring to a boil and add thickening. When boiled, add coconut milk and stir well. Ready to serve.

#### 材料:

罐頭粟米茸1罐、糖200克、馬蹄300克、椰絲1個、粟米粉4湯匙  
(加清水4湯匙拌勻)

#### 做法:

1. 馬蹄去皮切碎。
2. 椰絲加水3湯匙取椰漿。
3. 將粟米茸倒入清水3碗、馬蹄及糖。煮滾後，加入粟米粉水勾芡，滾後倒入椰漿拌勻即成。

### Pan-fried Dumpling 鍋貼



#### Ingredients:

Minced ginger 1tsp, minced celery 1tbsp, beancurd 100g (shredded), mushroom 30g (shredded), cabbage 300g (shredded), carrot 1/3pc (shredded)

#### Skin ingredients:

Wheat flour 300g, salt 1tsp, sesame oil 1tbsp, warm water 180cc

#### Seasoning:

- (1) Granulated sugar, mushroom essence and pepper 1tsp each
- (2) Cornstarch 2tsp mix with 3tsp water

#### Method:

1. Heat pan with oil and fry all the ingredients. Add seasoning (1) followed by (2) and lastly, a little sesame oil and set aside.
2. Mix wheat flour, salt, sesame oil together, add in the warm water slowly and knead into dough
3. Roll the dough into a long shape and divide into nuggets the size of your thumb. Flatten the dough, wrap a little filling in each and fold into the shape of a dumpling.
4. Heat non-stick pan with a little oil, put in dumpling followed by wheat flour water, cover and heat for 8 mins. Add a little sesame oil and fry till golden brown. Ready to serve.

#### 材料:

姜末1茶匙、芹菜末1湯匙、豆干100克(切絲)、香菇30克(切絲)、高麗菜300克(切絲)、紅萝卜1/3根(切絲)

#### 皮材料:

面粉300克、鹽1茶匙、香油1湯匙、溫水180cc

#### 調味料:

- (1) 砂糖、香菇精、胡椒粉各1茶匙
- (2) 太白粉2茶匙加水3茶匙拌勻

#### 做法:

1. 淨鍋熱油把全部材料炒香，加調味料(1)，再加入(2)快炒勾芡。淋上香油起鍋。
2. 將面粉、鹽和香油混合慢慢加入溫水，搓成軟滑之粉團。
3. 把面粉團擀成長條，分切比母指略大點。把小面團成圓形薄片，包入餡料，捏成鍋貼的形狀。
4. 平底鍋燒熱加點油，將鍋貼排放鍋中，淋入面粉水，蓋上鍋蓋以小火煎8分鐘，開蓋淋上一點香油，煎約一分鐘直到底層微黃焦脆即可。






One of the basic yet most important teachings of mindful awareness is that we are all connected to one another in one way or another, and dependent upon one another. Even young children can learn to see and appreciate this interconnection!

There's a game I play with little kids using a felt board and felt figures that helps them understand interconnection in a fun and playful way. I take cut-outs of felt figures of corn growing, clouds, the sun, rain, farmers, tractors, trucks, mums, dads, children, grandparents, plates, bowls and other everyday items and arrange them on a table.

Using a felt board I then ask the kids to come up and choose one felt figure from the table and place it on the felt board. I start by showing them how to put the figures on the board and I start off by perhaps putting up the corn figure first. Next, one by one, the kids come up to the board and choose a figure and tell us how it is connected to the picture as they press it onto the felt board.

For example, the sun is connected because it helps the corn to grow. The same with the rain, while the farmer tends the corn, the tractor helps the corn to grow by keeping the fields clear, the man and woman harvest the corn, the truck takes it to the store, grandma cooks the corn, and the kids eat the corn. And that's how they're all connected. Then we talk about how we couldn't have corn to eat without everyone helping, including Mother Nature herself.

If you want to, you can pass out corn chips, or other healthy snacks made of corn, so that as the children snack, you can talk more about all the people, places and things that came together to bring this corn to them. 

## Learning Interconnection

By Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of *The Mindful Child*, and Founder of the Inner Kids Foundation which developed the Inner Kids mindful awareness programme for children, teens and families.





# The Secret of the Buddha's Smile

*I think it is time to face yourself again.  
Then again, it is always time.*

- Stonepeace

BY | Shen Shi'an

One of the most iconic images of Buddhism is surely that of the Buddha sitting silently under a tree, with his eyes half-closed, while beaming the most beautiful, compassionate and understanding smile ever. So enduring is this depiction of the Buddha in deep peace and composure that, whether in the form of statues or pictures, it is the most reproduced image in the world. It is appreciated not only by Buddhists, but by people from various cultural walks of life - to the extent that Buddha images have become home decor must-haves for many!

Yet, as alluring as the Buddha's smile is, many of us are puzzled by it, for it presents many a mystery... Why is the Buddha smiling? What is he smiling about? How did he manage to attain the True Happiness that his smile represents? Perhaps most importantly, can we smile a similar smile too? Of course we can! Is that not the deeper reason why we venerate the Buddha - so as to draw inspiration from him, so as to emulate his perfect compassion and wisdom? The good news is that ever since the Buddha smiled his 'magical' smile, he shared how we can do so too.

The Buddha smiles because he has made peace, not only with himself, but with the rest of the world too. This should not be mistaken as constant abiding in a state of complacent inactivity, for Buddhahood is realised through the active perfection of compassion to benefit all beings, and through the perfection of wisdom to know how to best help them. What the eternally seated Buddha represents is the state of enlightened bliss that the Buddha abides in, even as he does his best, doing whatever is necessary in the moment, to guide beings to the same enlightenment (synonymous with True Happiness).

The secret of the Buddha's smile lies in the mastery of his mind through the practice of meditation. The

pose we see Buddha images in is usually that of the Buddha in the classic meditation posture. There are many forms of meditation taught today, with various purposes and techniques, just as in the Buddha's time. The Buddha himself mastered meditation methods from the greatest meditation teachers available then, only to realise that their methods were inadequate for attaining enlightenment.

What then, sets the Buddha's meditation methods apart? The Buddha too taught many forms of meditation, as part of the Noble Eightfold Path to liberation. In this sense, the Buddha never really taught any meditation technique for its own sake, as the ultimate goal is always nothing less than perfect enlightenment. Buddhist meditation thus should ideally not be practised merely as a feel-good relaxation exercise, like one doing yoga only for fitness. It would be a great pity to shortchange ourselves of meditation's full benefits! Nevertheless, the meditation techniques that the Buddha taught can still benefit many who do not yet aspire for enlightenment.

A good example of a Buddhist meditation method suitable for all, Buddhist or not, is the practice of loving-kindness (*Metta*) meditation, whereby one systematically cultivates thoughts and energy of loving-kindness, first within and for oneself, before radiating it to the world. Often mistaken as a simple visualisation exercise, when one is well-trained in *Metta* meditation, transformative waves of loving-kindness can truly be generated, felt and extended. Strong *metta* is a soothing balm not just for one's troubled mind, but heals - through loving words and deeds too - and reaches far beyond oneself. With more *Metta* for all, you will get closer to the Buddha's blissful smile too!



One of the most common misconceptions about meditation is that it is dangerous, which unfortunately keeps some a perpetual distance from attaining the Buddha's smile. This is a very general misconception indeed. The argument against it is that it easily applies to virtually everything else in life. For instance, it is dangerous to drive too, as one might have a fatal crash. Similarly, it is dangerous to swim as one might drown. The truth is, nothing is dangerous if it is learnt properly from a skilful teacher. Just as a masterful driver or swimmer knows how to keep safe, so does a good meditation practitioner.

Someone remarked to a friend new to meditation that though meditation may bring benefits according to many independent scientific reports, it is dangerous as demons may infiltrate the meditator's mind. Though well-meaning, the truth is that meditation, when practised properly, is precisely to learn how to mindfully protect one's mind from inner demons, which are our spiritual defilements like attachment, aversion and delusion (which cause unhappiness), and outer demons such as any adverse external circumstances. In this sense, it is more dangerous not to meditate!

Meditation always involves mindfulness. A mindful practitioner is not only in control, but in greater control than usual. As such, it is not possible to 'lose one's mind' through meditation. In fact, one becomes a better master of one's mind. That said, there are some who might be less suitable for certain forms of meditation due to mental ailments. Yet, there is always at least one method suitable for each person. Just as a doctor can prescribe the right medicine for physical ills, a good meditation teacher can likewise prescribe the best method.

Meditation is also not about making the mind blank as mindfulness is always required. As such, it is not about doing nothing or daydreaming. Once again, with the presence of mindfulness and control, there is no need to worry about being brainwashed. It is only by surrendering mindfulness that brainwashing can happen. In contrast, whenever we live our lives mindlessly, in the state of a mental haze, we are somewhat 'brainwashing' ourselves already! Meditation thus reverses this tendency and reconnects us with genuine conscious living.

Another common misconception about meditation is that it is very difficult to practise. Using the examples of driving and swimming again, it is always challenging at first, for anyone who is new to any skill, to master it. When the going gets a little tough, we should remind ourselves of the immeasurable worth of mastering our minds – the very source of our happiness and unhappiness. The good news is that practice does make perfect. Therefore, let us practise diligently! It is also appropriate to start by learning the simpler, foundational meditation techniques such as mindfulness of breathing (Anapanasati).

It is worth noting too, that the practice of chanting done well is also a meditative practice. It has effects similar to other meditation techniques in cultivating calmness and clarity of mind. That chanted can include sutras (discourses of the Buddha), mantras (strings of sacred syllables for invoking pure states of mind such as the mantra of compassion – 'Om Mani Padme Hung') or general prayers. The chanting of 'homage to' or 'refuge in' (Namo) various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is practised too, the most popular of which is 'Namo Amitufo' (Amitabha Buddha). The benefits of these practices are tremendous as well.

Contrary to popular belief, meditation is not a dull activity at all. In fact, it is the doorway to the greatest inner adventure ever : to discover and actualise the hidden potential of the mind. The practice of meditation eventually leads to mastery of both the inner and the outer worlds, as we increase in fortitude that enables us to better face the vicissitudes of life, to remain smiling like the Buddha in the eye of the storm. Through meditation, may we spring to greater life with mindfulness, as we master the smile of the Buddha!

*Heedfulness is the path to the deathless (Nirvana: liberation from suffering of rebirth).*

*Heedlessness is the path to death (and rebirth).*

*The heedful die not (as they are alive with mindfulness).*

*The heedless are as if dead already (as they live mindlessly).*

- The Buddha 🙏



# Sharing the Dharma...

BY | Teo Puay Kim

I woke up far earlier than usual on 23 October 2010 at 6am. It was a special day as the *Buddhist Conference 2554: Creating Happiness in the Here and Now* would be held that day. Together with Jason, our volunteer driver and Ryan, my godson, I went to pick up Mr Danai Chanchaochai. Danai was ready with a warm smile when we met him. On the way to the Conference, we chatted about Danai's work in Bangkok propagating the Dharma. I was pleasantly surprised by the innovative projects that Danai had initiated in Thailand. I sought permission to visit him in Bangkok next year to learn more from him and he readily agreed.

When we reached the Hall of No Form at Phor Kark See Monastery around 8 am, it was bustling with activity. I hurried over to the VIP area to pay my respects to the Venerables and to chat with the speakers. As a Director of Dharma In Action (DIA), my job was to help put our guests at ease.

My first task at the Conference was to give the opening remarks. Thankfully, I did not stumble (I think) and it was mercifully short. After I was seated, the Conference kicked into gear. Norman, the compere, warmed up the audience and Venerable Chuan Ren started the morning with a *Metta* meditation session. Ching Wi, the Conference Director, said later that she felt the *metta* radiating from the audience. What a great way to start a conference!

Danai was next and he charmed the audience with his Thai accent and gentle manner. He shared tips and insights on attaining happiness in our daily life. His charisma was practically flowing over the hall and I still remember his startling anecdote on how, as a penniless youth, he had to console a millionaire relative on being happy! In our era of materialism, his reminders were timely. During lunch, many young Buddhists crowded around him to ask questions.

Geshe Tenzin Zopa gave the second keynote lecture after the lunch break and this being the first time I heard him, I was impressed by his command of the language and the easy-going manner in which he conveyed his messages. We also had Venerable Faxun sharing simple and effective tips for happiness. Uncle Vijaya led a breakout session filled with laughter and Dr Phang engaged the audience with his unique blend of medical knowledge and Buddhism.

When the Conference ended at 6.30pm after the Q & A session and blessing ceremony, I felt elation and gratitude that things went well and there were no major hiccups. Sharing the Dharma with people has always been, for me, a joyful experience and I am happy that this year, DIA has fulfilled its mission again. We are deeply grateful to all the speakers and volunteers for their time and effort to make 2010 a fruitful year for Dharma In Action. ♪

## are we happier?

BY | Toh Sze Gee

Am I happier—say, than I was ten years ago?  
Are my peers happier—relative to the folks of our parents' times?  
And how about people now—compared to our ancestors a century ago?  
YES! YES! And YES!

For, we humans, priding ourselves as highly intelligent, incessantly strive for betterment and excellence.

Therefore, over time, every one of us *should* become happier and happier.

But, honestly, are we happier?

"Oh, if only I have more money..."

"Oh, if only I have higher status..."

What if our assumptions regarding where we can find happiness are somehow flawed?

Perhaps we really haven't been as clever as we would like to believe?

Are we daring enough to consider the possibility that the causes of true happiness may lie somewhere else—not out there, but within ourselves?





# Cultivating Emotional Balance Through Mindfulness

Venerables Ton Nghiem, Phap Hai, Phap Kham, Hoc Nghiem and Phap Tinh, disciples of renowned Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh discuss emotional balance in Buddhist practice with Toong Ling Jun.



Ven. Ton Nghiem



Ven. Phap Tinh



Ven. Hoc Nghiem



Ven. Phap Kham



Ven. Phap Hai

**Awaken:** Please tell us about the mindfulness practice that Plum Village advocates around the world?

**Venerables:** It is the heart of Buddhist meditation. We see the importance of using our daily lives as our practice. For so many of us, our lives are really busy and we don't have time to practise hours of sitting meditation everyday. But we do have the opportunity to use the situations in our daily lives as opportunities to awaken. When we're walking, stuck in traffic, on the subway, we can follow our breathing, and we can come back and be really present. When we're present with what's going on within us and around us, we can then realise what's taking place within our mind—whether

we're happy, sad or angry, etc. We can look deeply and see its source and transform it. Our practice is really a practice of engaging deeply with daily life as it presents itself.

**Awaken:** How can strict observance of the *Five Mindfulness Trainings* or Mindfulness practice lead to healing of the heart, to emotional balance, and ultimately to complete liberation?

**Venerables:** The *Five Mindfulness Trainings* are like guidelines to a happy life. The *Five Mindfulness Trainings* do not just say to follow strict rules, but to stay aware, so that when we act we have our minds to help and guide us. I think that presently, one of the major obstacles in modern life is over-consumption.



When we consume, we have to be aware that the things we consume don't come for free. When we read a newspaper, we have to fell trees to produce the paper. If we use water, the water has to come from somewhere. We have to use them in such a way that we can conserve the natural resources so that future generations can still enjoy them.

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One thing that we can build the most and have a lot of is mindful consumption. Natural resources are limited and we have to be careful not to over-consume.

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Right now, online gaming is a big problem. Obsessive attachment to the Internet is not mindful consumption. Family activities are interrupted because people spend too much time on the Internet. Our Mindfulness Training guidelines teach us to be aware of certain television programmes, magazines and internet content that can affect our way of life, and to make sure that the way we consume will not cause mental or bodily harm. The *Five Mindfulness Trainings* are therefore guidelines that can help bring peace to our mind and our body.

**Awaken:** How can compassion towards those who are uncompassionate or those who treat us unjustly give rise to emotional balance and make us feel happier and at peace?

**Venerables:** In Buddhism, we learn to wake up to our real situation and the situation of the world around us. One key teaching of Buddhism is in *The Sutra of The Eight Realisations of Great Beings*. There is a short sentence but it is very beautiful. It says, "Our mind is always searching outside of itself, and never feels fulfilled." Whether we're talking about the *Five Mindfulness trainings* or meditation practice, first of all in Buddhist practice, we want to come back and look inside ourselves. We're so conditioned or socialised by our society to look at, judge and evaluate other people, but Buddhism is about looking at our own mind and developing our own capacity to open our heart, and to be present for ourselves and others.

When we look deeply, we're able to see that everyone and everything is interconnected. We look at other people and think that they are the ones

that make us suffer or that they are separate from us. Using one of the practices from our tradition, let's take the example of a flower. We think that it is separate from us, but if we start to look deeply through the practice of mindfulness, we begin to see the sunshine, the rain and the farmers that planted and harvested the flower. We see that the flower contains in it all the conditions of life, right there, in that manifestation. We ourselves also contain all those conditions of life. There is no separation between us and the flower. So if we see that someone is creating difficulty or suffering for us, we come back and look at ourselves. Especially if we're feeling a strong emotion, our tendencies are always to react right away, to teach that person a lesson, or something like that. In Buddhist practice when we notice that somebody has done something to us, or when we're in a situation where we feel uncomfortable or angry, the first step is to stop, come back to ourselves, follow our breathing, and to look at what's important right then. If we have developed a practice of mindfulness, maybe we can stay in that situation and be present with that person, even if we're feeling a little bit emotional.

If we're not yet strong enough, and we feel that we can be carried away by our anger, then we have a practice called "changing the peg" or "changing the CD". In a CD player with four or five CDs, when one CD is not very nourishing, we press the button and change to another CD. This means that if we don't have the capacity to be present with that person in a way that is not harmful, we need to go and do something that is nourishing to calm down. For example, we may practise walking meditation, or look at nature so that we can nourish ourselves, and then we come back and look at what seed in ourselves was touched through that interaction.

Our teacher has a very beautiful poem, *Call Me By My True Names*, which is a contemplation on inter-being and seeing that the people who make us suffer are not separate from us. Like in the situation of the boat people in Vietnam, I am the young child who's been raped, but I look deeply and see that I am also the sea pirate, and see all the conditions that led the sea pirate to that moment. Our natural tendency is to side with the victim, but we also need to understand the whole situation. When we see things through the lenses of inter-being,



it becomes easy to know what actions we need to and shouldn't take in that moment. So much of our emotions are based on wrong perceptions; in fact, the Buddha says that 100 percent of our perceptions are incorrect. Our teacher is a little bit compassionate, and he says 99 percent! In any situation, we found that one thing very helpful in transforming our mind right way is a very simple kōan, which is, "Are you sure?" Are you *really* sure that the way that you see things in this moment is correct? Did that person really mean that? Is there a real intention to harm us? So much of our suffering is based on the stories that we tell ourselves about the experience, rather than being in contact with the experience itself. This is an important distinction to make in Buddhist practice.

**Awaken:** How did you manage to maintain emotional balance when the Vietnamese government destroyed Prajna Monastery in Bat Nha Vietnam in 2009?

**Venerables:** In Buddhist practice, impermanence is one of three seals of the world (Dharma) — which is the teaching of the Buddha. Life presents us with many uncertainties. If we are aware that difficult things happen in life, we will be better able to deal with it. To deal with the emotional ups and downs in the Bat Nha situation, we realised that things are impermanent, that things change and so, we have to adapt to these changes. We had been staying [in Bat Nha] for four or five years and suddenly were forced out. To deal with that, we do not get caught up in physical things, but focus on building a spiritual life. What we have is brotherhood and sisterhood and that doesn't depend much on physical space.

After we were asked to leave Bat Nha, we gathered at the Chùa Phước Huệ temple. 300 of us were there. From a place where we had 30 hectares to walk around and do walking meditation, we were now confined to a few rooms and a smaller yard, but the brotherhood and sisterhood were still there to carry on the practice; to still take care of one another, and that helped manage the emotional ups and downs.

There are many reasons for things to happen, but since they had already happened, what we had to deal with was how to take care of one another. So we re-grouped and demonstrated how to take care of one another regardless of the difficult situation.

Before, in Bat Nha, we had beds for each of us to sleep in, but when we took refuge in another temple, we were packed like sardines, with no space to twist and turn, but the funny miracle is, our brotherhood and sisterhood became stronger and we're even closer to one another. What we built in Bat Nha is brotherhood and sisterhood, and we can carry that wherever we go.

**Awaken:** How can we cultivate emotional balance in our daily living? What is an emotionally balanced life?

**Venerables:** Life manifests in many different ways. To deal with its different aspects in mindful ways, we have to go back to our breath. The way to get interested deeply in life is through mindful breathing. As I'm sitting with you now, I'm breathing in and out and being aware of this moment. Only in this moment can I get in touch with life. So, if we can get in touch with our present moment, we can get in touch with every aspect of life, whether we are angry, sad, happy or blessed.

During the persecution in Bat Nha, there were groups of men coming to attack the nuns. One of the men broke the glass with a hammer, and the broken glass wounded him. One of the sisters saw that the man was wounded, and even though she was beaten and chased out of the temple by that man, she took bandages and took care of his wounds. She was very deeply in the present moment and saw that this person was in pain, and thought, "I need to take care of him" regardless of what happened earlier. She went back to her breath, and knowing what she had practised - love and understanding - she took care of him.

The practice of Mindfulness is a practice of using our breathing to bring the mind and body back together in one place. When that happens, we know what happens inside our mind and body, and the environment around us. We can then take appropriate action in that environment. Suppose I'm talking to somebody and I'm saying something that makes the other person sad. If I'm not mindful, I will continue to talk. If I'm mindful, I will begin to see the expression on that person's face, and adjust and be aware and more mindful of what I say. The secret is to be mindful of our breath – in-breath and out-breath - in order to be mindful of what happens



inside of me, in my body and mind, as well as what other people are feeling. That way I can bring more joy to other people.

**Awaken: How can we touch and embrace fear and suffering?**

**Venerables:** There's a very beautiful teaching of the Buddha. It's a sutra called *Discourse on Fear and Dread*. The Buddha shares his experience of entering the forest to practise so as to attain Enlightenment. He said that contrary to everyone's ideas about living in the forest, for him, he was filled with fear. The noise of a stick breaking in the middle of the night would conjure in him images of tigers coming at him. Nothing was really working for him to transform his fear. Then he discovered a method he started to use. If he was walking and fear came upon him, he would continue walking until he understood the source of it. If he was lying down, he wouldn't move. If he was sitting, he'd do the same thing. In our culture we're conditioned to try to distract ourselves by doing other things so that we do not have to confront our fears.

This teaching of the Buddha seems to be very simple, but it's a metaphor for what we need to do in our practice: not to look away, not to ignore or hide what's going on, but to face up to our real situation and see how to transform it.

We're so used to suppressing our fears that we don't have the opportunity to transform them. Let's say we're walking along a dark path at night and we see a long shape. Fear arises because in our mind we perceive that it could be a snake. When fear has arisen, we need to know what to do in order to take care of that emotion. We need to recognise that fear for what it is. We call it by its true name. If it's very strong, we practise embracing it like a mother. We will be very gentle with that fear. We calm our body first of all by coming back to our breath. When we're calm and present again, we look and examine the situation. Is it a snake? If it really is a snake, then we know what to do. Maybe we need to turn around and go back the other way.

So much of our life is lived above our nose in this area (Ven. Phap Hai points to his head). In Mindfulness practice, we want to come down to the core of our body. We call it "mindfulness", but it

doesn't mean "mind" up here (pointing again to his head). Mind is contained in every cell of our body.

Another practice that we can do if we notice that fear is upon us, in addition to mindful breathing, is total relaxation. If we have the opportunity, we can just sit or lie down and practise going consciously to every part of our body and relaxing it. We also express gratitude to every part of our body. We notice that the fear dissipates. Emotions don't only manifest in the mind, but through the body as well. If we begin to develop these tendencies of coming back to our breath and relaxing, then it's almost like a cognitive re-training of our mind so we're able to develop these positive habits such that we don't get carried away by our emotions. Automatically something switches on in us and we go straight back to the practice at all times. These are some of the things we do in order to transform our fear energy—to stay with it, look deeply at it and understand its source and that feeling.

**Awaken: Thay Thich Nhat Hanh is a Buddhist poet. Given the emotional intensity of self-exploration and self-expression in poetry, what is the relationship between the writing process and the practice of mindfulness?**

**Venerables:** In Mindfulness practice, we're looking deeply at our own situation and the situation of the world around us. Mindfulness is not an escape from the world but a way of engaging deeply with life and waking up to our real situation. When you're writing, whether it's a song, story or poem, you're reflecting deeply about your situation, and some insight is being offered. This is good art—art that helps us to encounter life in a new way.

As artists we have a real responsibility to the public at large. We need to be able to express beauty and wisdom so that people can begin to see things differently. We need to reflect on the opposite of creation, which is destruction, and make sure that when we create, we're offering things that generate compassion, wisdom and insight rather than distraction.

In our Mindfulness practice we're encouraged to write stories or articles. I remember our teacher giving a Dharma talk a number of years ago and the rain started to fall. Our teacher said, "I don't have



to speak anymore, the rain is giving a beautiful Dharma talk.” He asked everyone to stop and to go sit near the window and look at the rain, and write a song in that moment. One of our sisters, Sister Annabel wrote a song that we still use in our tradition. It is: “the rain is falling oh so softly, homage to the bodhisattva who refreshes the earth.” It’s very beautiful.

In any moment, life is presenting itself to us. Art can be a way of really encapsulating the moment and presenting it as a gift for the world. So, Mindfulness and artistic practice fit together intrinsically.

In fact, in Hong Kong, an exhibition of Thay’s calligraphy, writing and art was conducted last November. It was called *Mindful Art* and was held for two months.

**Awaken: What do you think is lacking in our society?**

(Ven. Phap Kham laughs) iPods?

(Ven. Ton Nghiem) I think what is lacking is simple happiness—the fact that we can recognise that we can be happy without needing so many things. We just need to look inside and around us to see that we already have everything that we need. We can just enjoy what we already have. (Pause) This sounds very simple, but if we could all do that, a little bit everyday, we will have much, much less suffering in our society.

(Ven. Phap Kham) We’re living in a material world and think that external things can bring us happiness. Singapore and Hong Kong are known as shoppers’ paradises. Sadly, although promoting consumption is a way to keep the economy going, over-consumption reduces happiness because people look for happiness from the outside rather than inside. So what is lacking now is the will to look inside ourselves for the real source of happiness. ☺

**The Merits of Producing Buddhist Teachings and Buddha Images**

1. One's light karmic misgivings will dissolve, while heavy ones lighten.
2. One will be protected by devas, and be unharmed by natural and man-made disasters.
3. One will always be free from the suffering of hatred and vengeance.
4. One will be unharmed by yaksas, evil spirits and wild beasts.
5. One's mind will be at peace, free from harm and nightmares.
6. One's complexion will be radiant.
7. One will be full of auspicious energy.
8. One who practises the Dharma wholeheartedly will have adequate living necessities.
9. One's family will be harmonious and be blessed with fortune and wisdom.
10. One who practises what one preaches will be respected and loved by all.
11. One who is dull-minded will gain wisdom.
12. One who is ill will gain health.
13. One who is poor will gain wealth.
14. One will be free of being reborn in the negative realms.
15. One will be able to help others grow in wisdom and gain great merits in doing so.
16. One will always be able to learn the Dharma, fill one's wisdom and spiritual penetrations are fully grown and one becomes a Buddha.

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# Developing Emotional Balance

Susan M. Griffith-Jones tells us how some simple mind training exercises can help us to develop emotional balance in our lives

When our human emotions are brought out of balance by various inner and outer influences, the mind becomes turbulent and cannot relax. This may be likened to waves being tossed around on the surface of the ocean, while the depth of the ocean remains as calm as ever. Likewise, the natural state of our mind always remains in perfect harmony even when it is seemingly troubled on the surface.

It is important to remember this point, because then we can try not to get carried away by what is happening in the moment, but bear in mind the significance of our mind's real nature.

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If one would like to reduce the ups and downs of everyday emotions, then one should follow a path of mind training. Such a path is explained explicitly in the Buddhist teachings. Mind training is essential towards creating an overall balance in one's life, just as practising any craft or skill again and again is essential to learning a profession.

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Mind training may be broken down into a few aspects. The first part of this process is to start by contemplating the meaning of having gained



a human life, how precious it is to have obtained this human body and its possibility to lead one to enlightenment. Animals and other creatures do not have this potential, but as human beings we have the framework for such attainment.

Then one looks at how no material object, whether on Earth or in the Universe, or any living being, is permanent. Everything around us is changing all the time: forms are mutating, living beings are being born, are growing up, and are eventually dying. Moreover, the conditions of our lives are in constant flux. Rich men become poor and poor men become rich; healthy people become sick and sick people become healthy; unhappy ones become happy and happy ones become unhappy.

When we reflect thus, we will find that there are also many classes of beings. These are usually categorised into six main ones: the three higher realms of humans, demi-gods and gods; and the three lower realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts and animals. When we see how each of these realms may also manifest as our emotions in daily living, we realise that we, as humans, are also constantly jumping between the various mind states of these realms.

For example, the hell realm is dominated by anger, the hungry ghost realm by desire, and the animal realm by stupidity or ignorance. As humans, we suffer constant change and as demi-gods, jealousy. Last of all, the god realm has the nature of pride. Just as our minds whirl around these various emotional states day by day, so too in our various rebirths, beings are falling down and climbing up the ladder of these six realms, which in totality constitute 'samsara' and may be likened to a wheel that rotates ceaselessly.

This wheel is put into motion by one's karmic actions, so depending on how one places one's thoughts, words and deeds, these will influence the way one thinks, speaks and acts. If these are largely positive, then one will cultivate meritorious karma and will go

up on the scale. The converse is true.

The Buddha showed us a path away from this wheel of suffering that by following rigorously, we can eventually exit from this constantly spinning wheel and return to our real, enlightened nature. Our pristine nature has in truth never left us for one instant, but as we

are lured by the mire of worldly existence, attached to its illusions and niceties, we lose contact with our essential nature and become trapped in the wheel of samsara.

Therefore, it may be seen that the first step on the road to release from the cycle of suffering is by cultivating emotional balance by training the mind through contemplation of the above.

This may also be assisted by the meditation of calm-abiding (shamatha meditation), whereby one sits quietly in a cross-legged manner and gazes at an object placed around six feet away from one's body. This object may be a flower or a statue of Lord Buddha or anything that one feels comfortable with as long as it creates a peaceful and harmonious composure. The colour blue is helpful in calm-abiding meditation, so the object could be of this colour.

It is important to try not to create too many thoughts about the object as this can distract one's meditation, but just to simply let one's mind rest. The object is there as an anchor for the restless mind, something to focus all its scattered thoughts, not a picture to be described in detail!

Following this mind training daily, one can achieve vast results in a relatively short time. If one also has the great fortune to connect with a worthy master, then one may ask his/her advice on how to advance further on the path of meditation and become perfectly skilled in this art of mind training for positive living. ☺





# More Thought Training Meditations

Translated from Lobsang Yeshe Gyaltsan's  
*Lojong Gonkhyen* by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

**W**ith every actions that you do, generate bodhicitta as shown in the following examples:

When entering a monastery or a room, pray, "May all mother sentient beings be led into the cities of Liberation and Great Liberation." With bodhicitta, think, "As I enter this place, I'm leading them there."

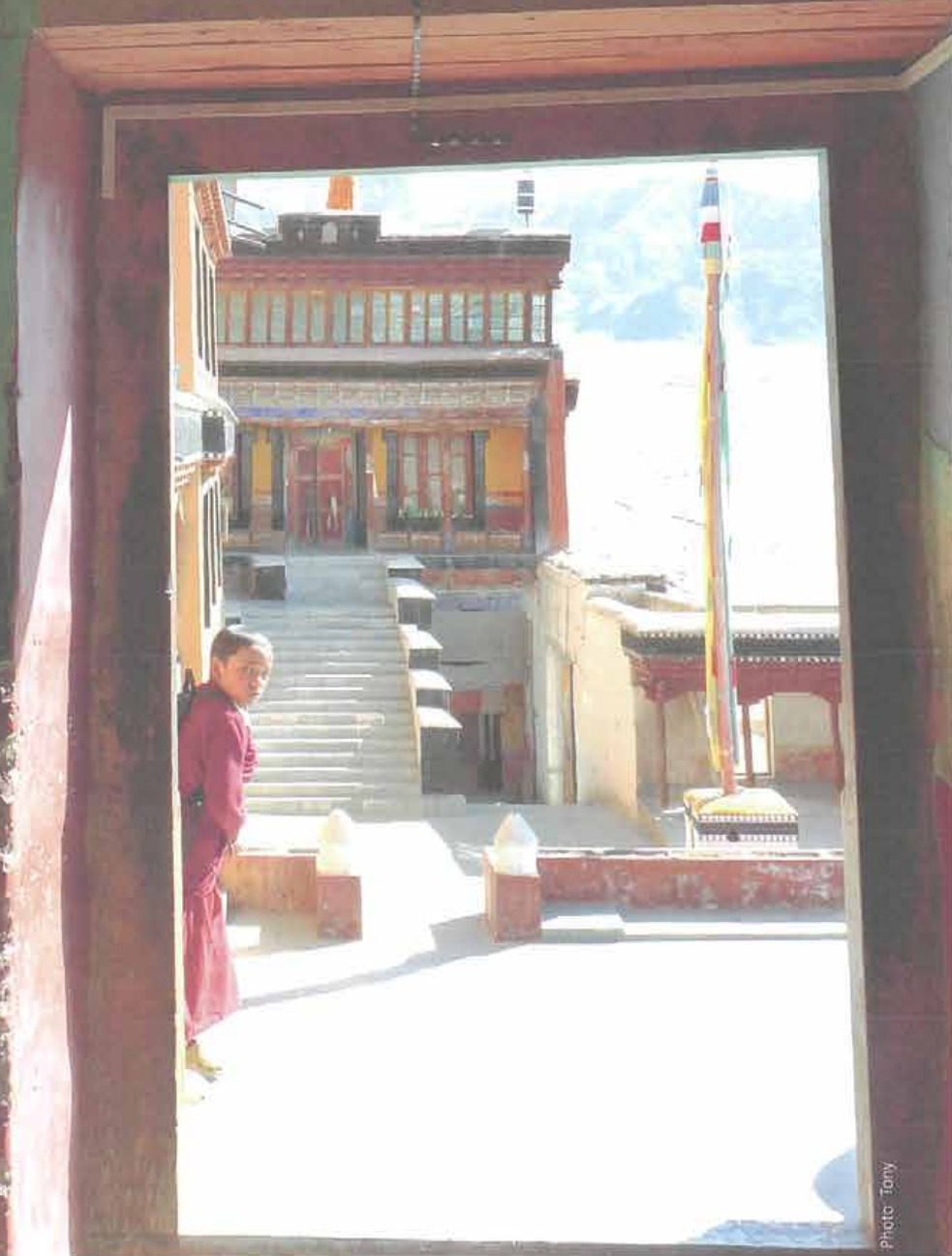
When leaving monasteries or rooms, think with bodhicitta, "May all sentient beings be freed from the prison of samsara. As I leave this place, I'm leading them out."

When opening a door, think, "May all the heavy-birth beings be freed from the hell realm by the transcendent wisdom gone beyond. As I open this door, I'm freeing them all."

When closing a door, think, "May all doors to the lower realms be shut forever and may no sentient being ever go there again. As I close this door, I'm sealing all doors to suffering rebirths."

When prostrating, visualise all sentient beings in human form and that you are leading them all in prostrations, thinking "May all mother sentient beings be purified."

When offering scented flowers to holy objects, think "May all sentient beings complete the





practice of morality, purifying all their broken precepts. May they complete the path of the six perfections.”

When looking at statues of the Buddha, think, “May all sentient beings receive the infinite good qualities of the Buddha’s supreme body, speech and mind.”

When looking at stupas, think, “May all sentient beings attain the Buddha’s omniscient mind, which this stupa symbolises.”

When lying down to sleep, recline in the lion position that Shakyamuni Buddha assumed when he passed away, think, “May I lead all sentient beings to nirvana and enlightenment, As I lie down like this, I’m leading them to nirvana and enlightenment.”

When getting up in the morning, think “May all sentient beings be free from all delusions. As I arise, I’m freeing them all from samsara.”

When going to the toilet, think, “May all sentient beings’ delusions and mental defilements vanish. As I excrete, I’m eliminating them completely.”

When bathing, think, “May the stains of all sentient beings’ delusions be completely purified. As I wash myself, I’m washing away their stains.”

When eating, think, “May I see the suffering of all present and future sentient beings and feel their hunger and thirst. May all enjoy the undiluted blissful nectar of transcendent wisdom.”

When sweeping, think, “May the dirt of all sentient beings’ greed, ignorance and hatred be completely purified. As I sweep away this dirt, I’m eradicating their three poisons.”

When switching on a light or lighting a lamp, think, “May I switch on all sentient beings’ light of wisdom and illuminate their darkness of ignorance, enabling them to see the ultimate truth, through first having lit the lamp of wisdom within myself.”

When sitting down, think, “May all sentient beings reach enlightenment.”

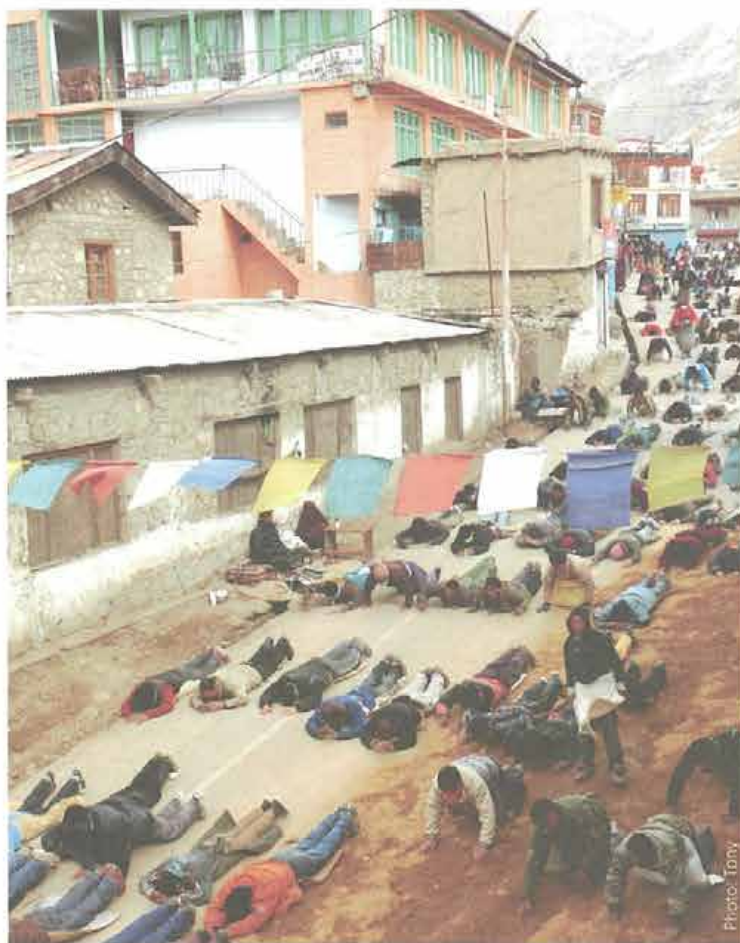


Photo: Tony

When reading a book, think, “May all mother sentient beings realise without confusion the meaning of every word of the Buddha’s profound and extensive teachings. As I read and understand this book, all sentient beings are realising the teachings in their entirety.”

When leaving to go somewhere, think, “May all sentient beings follow the Mahayana path. As I have to go, I’m leading them along it.”

When helping other people, think, “May all sentient beings be like Avalokiteshvara, who has completed all the holy deeds of a Buddha and delightedly takes on the work of others. May I stop the egoistic thought of wanting to progress simply for my own benefit, and never again be lazy or discouraged in the practice of bodhicitta.”

When looking at scenery, think, “May all sentient beings attain the omniscient mind, fully realising the vast number of varied existences in their absolute pure nature.”

Extracted from the book *Making Life Meaningful* by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Edited by Nicholas Ribush. Courtesy FPMT ([www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)) and LYWA ([www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com))



# The Art of Living Happily in the Here and Now

BY | Toong Ling Jun



I am in the presence of the loving and compassionate Thich Nhat Hanh this evening. Several hundred of us gathered in Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery to hear him speak on the ways to live happily in the present.

We rise and put our palms together. Thay walks mindfully into the Hall of No Form, truly present in each step he takes.

Thay invites us to listen deeply and relax our bodies so that our collective energy could penetrate us. "If we chant from our heart, we will create a collective energy of compassion and peace that will penetrate everyone of us for our healing. In our bodies, there is accumulated stress and tension over many years. ...If we have pain, sorrow, fear, despair in our heart, we might like to open our heart, so the collective energy of the sangha can release the pain, sorrow,

fear and despair in us. If we know how to open our hearts, we'll feel better after five or ten minutes of listening. If you have a close friend who is suffering, think of him or her and whisper his or her name softly and the collective energy of the sangha will be transmitted to him or her."

Every sound is magnified, a rustle of clothing, a brush of feet against the floor, every feeling is palpable, every part of my body is relaxed. I am fully alive, fully present in this moment. The next moment follows, and I am present, alive, breathing in, breathing out, hearing the air fill my nose and flow through my entire body. I release all my tension through my exhaling breath. The energy of the Sangha takes away my pain and suffering. I feel the presence of a breathing collective body, whose pain and suffering I feel, so palpable in my breath. I am outside myself, I am inside myself. Thay rings the



bell, purifying the collective breath of the Sangha. Circles of sound echo across the hall and slowly disappear. I am befriended again by silence that fills my heart.

Thay says, "There are so many refreshing, healing, nourishing elements inside and around us." When we are in touch with the present moment, we will be able to experience all these wonderful elements to nourish and transform ourselves. Thay teaches, "Mindfulness is the energy that enables us to be fully present in the here and now." "Many of us, however, are not experiencing happiness in the present moment." Buddhist teaching and practice can teach us how to "live deeply every moment of our daily life." Thay says, "When you practise walking mindfully, every step brings you home to the here and now. Because you are able to walk freely without being attached to the past and future, every step can be healing and nourishing for you. . . every step that you make can help you contemplate more freedom, more joy, more happiness." We can practise mindfulness in any activity we're engaged in. Whether we are doing the dishes, drinking tea or walking, we can enhance our enjoyment of every moment by being fully present.

With the energy of mindfulness generated from the practice, we will be able to recognise the pain, sorrow, fear and anger inside of us and embrace them tenderly in order to transform them. "As good practitioners we should be capable of generating a moment of joy, happiness whenever we want to", Thay says. When we realise we have so many conditions for happiness that are already available in the present, we will stop running to the future. "If we know how to stop running, we will have the time to take care of ourselves and our loved ones." The practice of Buddhism can enable us to truly love.

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**"When you love someone, the most gracious thing you can offer him or her is your presence. To me, love is impossible if you are not there."**

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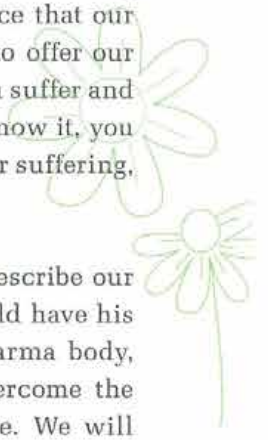
Thay tells us that we can make our presence fresh and pleasant for our loved ones through mindful breathing and walking. We should practise mindfulness to become fully present before beginning a conversation with our loved one; before

composing an e-mail or dialling a phone number. "You need only five or ten seconds...to breathe in and out in order to bring your mind back to your body. When mind and body are together, you are fully present in the here and now. You are no longer caught by the regret concerning the past, or anxiety and fear concerning the future. You are free to be there for your loved one." When we are mindful, we will be able to notice what is going on within and around us. We will notice if something is wrong with the person we love. When we notice that our loved one is suffering, we will be able to offer our true presence. Thay explains, "When you suffer and the person you love the most does not know it, you suffer more. If he or she knows about your suffering, you'll suffer less."

Thay uses the term "dharma body" to describe our practice. He says, "Every Buddhist should have his or her dharma body." With a good dharma body, we will be able to understand and overcome the suffering and difficulties we experience. We will also be able to help others overcome their pain and suffering. Thay says, "When we are able to listen deeply to the suffering inside of us, we are able to listen to the suffering of others." "With a good practice, you are no longer afraid and you can bring your practice wherever you go, to deal with whatever difficulties you might encounter."

For beginners in the practice, our dharma body might still be weak. The lack of a strong practice may make us afraid of getting in touch with our suffering as "we might not have enough mindfulness and concentration to embrace our sorrow, fear, anger and pain." Thay tells us that the sangha—a group of people who share and practise the Dharma—is the best way to learn and nourish our practice. "In a true Sangha, there is always brotherhood and sisterhood." We may approach our brothers and sisters of the Dharma with our pain, sorrow and fear, and ask them for help to recognise and embrace our suffering with the collective energy of the Sangha. With their help, we will be able to understand and transform our suffering.

Over the last forty years, Thay has helped to set up sanghas across Europe. Plum Village has also trained monastic and lay dharma teachers who help others return to the present to embrace and understand their suffering.







only one step and enter the kingdom of God. I told my friends that the kingdom of God is now or never. To my Buddhist friends, I would like to say the same thing. Don't wait until you die in order to go to the pure land. It might be too late. Listen to the Buddha's teaching, release your afflictions, and Amitabha Buddha and the pure land will be available to you in the here and now. There is not one day that I do not enjoy walking in the pure land. My pure land is a portable pure land. Wherever I go, the pure land is with me. My deepest desire is for my friends to also make the pure land available in their daily life."

Thay explains that materialism and over-consumption in our society destroys spiritual values and causes suffering. He describes a society that "provides us with many things in order to make us forget - to cover up - our suffering." He promotes the opposite practice, stating the need to understand the nature of our suffering in order to transform and heal ourselves. "If you always run away from your own suffering, you have no chance to understand it." Through mindfulness practice that generates concentration, "you become strong enough to go home to yourself and hold and embrace your

suffering in order to look deeply and understand it." When we have

understood it, the path of healing and transformation will appear to us. He tells us that Buddhist teaching and practice can alleviate our suffering. "With a good practice, we should be able to restore our spiritual values. We should be able to protect ourselves, our people and country from the destruction of our real values."

Thay tells us that our humanity currently faces a spiritual crisis. He argues that a dualistic way of thinking characterises westernised societies and causes suffering. He describes dualistic thinking as one that emphasises difference and keeps people apart. "The dualistic way of thinking is the cause of so much division, discrimination, hate and fear in our society." This brings to mind the 'us versus them', 'familiar versus other' mindset which continues to be promoted by the Western popular media. Thay proposes a global ethic that "can help us get out of this dangerous and difficult situation."




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**Thay teaches that we produce the living Dharma through our practice. "The living dharma is the energy of mindfulness and concentration that is generated by our practice."**

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For Thay, "a community who only speaks, learns and writes the Dharma down is not an authentic sangha yet." A true sangha is made of living dharma—where everyone is capable of generating the energy of mindfulness, concentration and insight. This is where we will be able to find the Buddha. "Wherever the living dharma is, the Buddha is." "When you practise mindful breathing, mindful walking, you are practically under the protection of the Buddha himself."

Thay explains that being in touch with the present moment is relevant to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. It enables us to release our afflictions and worries concerning the past and the future and feel whole again. "I have told my Christian friends that they do not have to die in order to go to the kingdom of God. It might be too late. In order to go to the kingdom of God, you have to be very alive! When you are truly alive and present, you make




Over the last three years, Thay and the Plum Village monastics have developed the insight of interbeing, “a kind of antidote for the dualistic way of thinking.” (Through meditation and discussion, they have developed a new version of the *Five Mindfulness Trainings* based on the insight of interbeing which “represents very well the teachings of the Fourth Noble Truth and the Noble Eightfold Path.”) Thay explains that the nature of interbeing means that nothing is complete in and of itself. “‘Dear Buddha, you are in me, and I am in you.’ That is the beginning of the insight of interbeing. It means, ‘Dear Buddha, I cannot be by myself alone, I have to interbe with you, my lord.’” Using the example of a flower, he states that it is made up of everything that contributes to its existence—the clouds, the rain, the sunshine, the compost, the gardener, the soil. “And that is why it is so easy to see that a flower is made only of non-flower elements”, Thay says. “The flower is full of the cosmos inside. The flower is empty of only one thing—a separate existence.” We need to recognise that all of us are interdependent – interbeings –made up of elements of one another. This will enable us to transcend the dualistic way of thinking that divides people, and “begin to think and act in the spirit of interbeing”, “the spirit of non-duality”, the spirit of love and compassion. As Thay writes in his book *All in One, One in All*, “We will see each other in every walk of life. We will recognise each other again and again, everywhere.”


Thay says that the world in a process of globalisation is “very much in need of a global ethic for everyone”. The new version of the *Five Mindfulness Trainings* based on the insight of interbeing represents the Buddhist version of a global ethic. Thay tells us, “Every spiritual tradition has to contribute its own wisdom and experience relating to a global ethic.” Thay’s new version of the five precepts “tries to speak a kind of language that can be understood and accepted by the other traditions of the world.” It promotes true happiness and true love. (The new version of the *Five Mindfulness Trainings*, which Thay strongly recommends us to read and apply to our daily living, can be found in Thay’s *For a Future to be Possible: Buddhist Ethics for Everyday Life*.)

The *Five Mindfulness Trainings*, reflecting the Noble Eightfold Path, promote Right Thinking, Loving

Speech and Right Action. Right Thinking “always carries with it the energy of understanding and compassion. Right after you have produced a thought of compassion and understanding, that thought begins to heal your body and your mind. Right after you have produced a thought of compassion and understanding, that thought begins to heal the world.” Conversely, a thought of hate, anger and fear destroys your health and destroys the world. “A good practitioner can always produce a thought of compassion and understanding several times a day.” The same thing is true of Loving Speech. “When you are able to say something that has the power to forgive, to love, to accept, that will have a good effect on your health and on the other person, right away. A good practitioner should be able to practise Loving Speech several times a day, in order to heal himself and the world.” The practice of Right Action – when we perform an action with our body in line with compassion and understanding – too “has the power to support; to protect; to save... ourselves, our world and our beautiful planet.”

Hearing these words, I begin to reflect on the purity and simplicity of Thay’s teaching. We do not need extraordinary feats but rather, basic, everyday, ordinary acts of kindness, compassion, and understanding to bring us more joy, freedom and happiness. “Dear friends, it is of great happiness to have you tonight with us”, Thay says. “Let us enjoy our breathing, smiling.”

That evening I arrived home and for the first time, I saw the cosmos in a flower. 

  
“Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.  
Breathing out, I feel fresh ...

Breathing in, I see myself as still water.  
Breathing out, I reflect things as they are.”

“We Are All Flowers”, *Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful Living*



*Peaceful Mind Open Heart: The Art of Living Happily in the Here and Now* was a five-day Mindfulness Retreat with Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh and the monks and nuns of Plum Village from the 8 to 12 September 2010 held at the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.



Long, long ago, there lived a beautiful, magnificent white elephant near the Himalayan Mountains. Always joyful, she was very happy to live there with her mother and other animal friends.

One day, news of her extraordinary beauty travelled to the ears of the king's elephant trainer. Hearing how gorgeous the elephant was, he decided he would capture and tame this lovely creature for the enjoyment and pleasure of the king. Hurriedly, he set off to find the elephant. When he found her, he tied a thick rope around her neck and lugged her all the way back to the training grounds.

Once there, the trainer forced her into a pen, where he jabbed, pushed and beat her repeatedly as he tried relentlessly to make the elephant do his bidding.

As the days passed, the white elephant became more and more terrified. You see in the wild, she had always been treated with gentleness and respect. Each time the trainer approached, she would break into a frenetic run into the sides of the pen until one day she finally smashed through. So afraid was the poor elephant that she did not stop running until she was in the deep recesses of the forest where she could never be found by humans again.

Alas, even though she was back safely in the dark shadows of the forest, the elephant was still highly strung and fearful. Each time a branch broke, or a rock tumbled from a hillside, she cowered in fear. Even the wind blowing through the trees gave her great distress.

Now, all this while, a wise old owl had been watching the daily activities of this fine-looking elephant high up in the trees. One day, the owl decided to speak to the elephant. When she flew down towards the elephant, the white elephant was startled. "Don't be alarmed, I only want to talk to you," said the owl gently. Quivering, the elephant stood and listened.

"I'm just a small bird, nothing for an enormous beauty like you to be frightful of. There are also no men near us. We are only surrounded by trees, shrubs and forest animals," assured the kind owl.

As the elephant appeared to relax a little, the owl continued, "All the fear you are experiencing stems from your own mind. Yet you are allowing it to control and destroy you."

"You know, it is in your power to restrain your thoughts and to keep in check your fear."

The elephant thought carefully about what the owl had said and realised she was correct. With utmost sincerity and gratitude, she thanked the owl for her kind guidance and from that day onwards tried to rein in her fear.

The beautiful white elephant was still very frightened at the beginning, but slowly, as the days went by, everything began to seem a little less menacing. Through the power of her own thoughts, she gradually controlled her fear. Before long, she slipped back to the happy life she had once enjoyed before the ordeal.



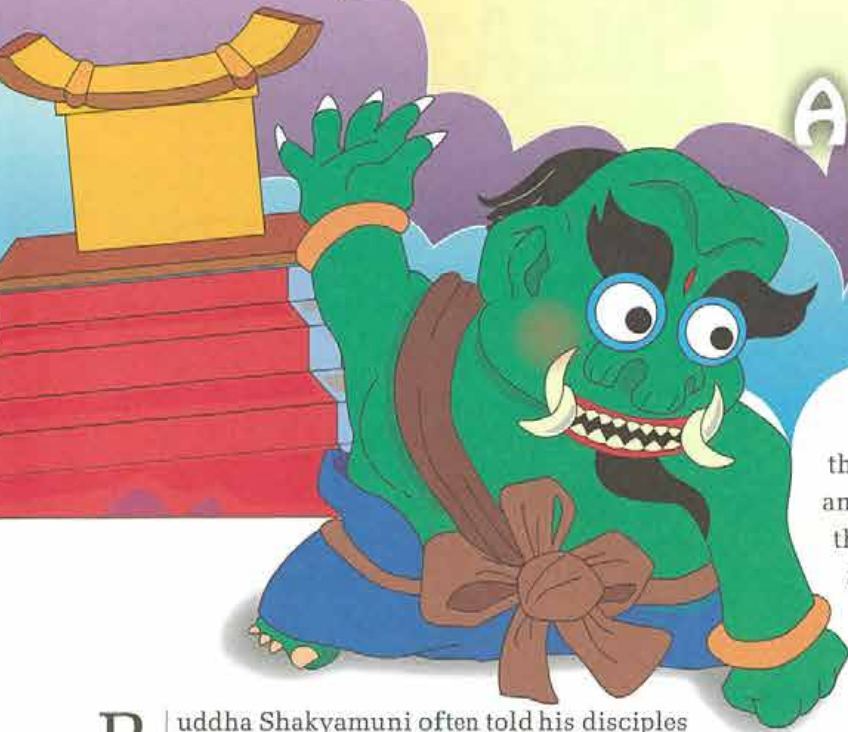
## The White Elephant and the Owl

ADAPTED BY | Esther Thien



# A Parable about a Yaksa

ADAPTED BY | Esther Thien



thought King Sakka immediately. Respectfully and with clasped hands, King Sakka came before the yaksa and said, "Virtuous one, I am King Sakka, the god king of the Heaven of Thirty-three."

**B**uddha Shakyamuni often told his disciples to be respectful and forgiving towards one another, so as to live harmoniously and be able to concentrate on their spiritual cultivation. Still, disputes and conflicts could not be avoided due to differences in individual opinions.

One day, two monastics had an argument that developed into a serious quarrel. When mediation by the rest of the community proved unsuccessful, the matter was brought before the Buddha. Seeing the fiery rage on the angry faces of the two monks, the Buddha assembled his disciples and told the following story:

Once there was a yaksa who was small and hideous. One day, this yaksa came to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and audaciously sat on the throne that belonged to the god King Sakka. The moment he sat down, all the celestial beings of this heaven were furious and reprimanded him bitterly for his insolence. As the scolding and ranting continued, the yaksa grew taller in stature and became better looking. When the heavenly beings saw the change, they became even more livid, while the yaksa continued morphing into a fine-looking well-built form.

Not knowing what to do with the situation, the divine beings highlighted the matter to King Sakka. "This yaksa must be someone extraordinary!"

Due to the god king's humility, the yaksa became conceited. As his arrogance soared, his previous ugly face and tiny stature resumed until he finally vanished. God King Sakka then ascended his throne and said to his retinue: "From now on, you must never breed anger. If someone is hostile to you or treats you unkindly, be cautious with your reaction. Do not add anger onto anger. If someone should offend you, do not seek to get even; instead, treat the offender with kindness. Learn from those who do not have anger or hostility in them, for they are the virtuous and saintly ones. All those who are hot-headed are clouded by arrogance. Have emotional awareness. Exercising a little control over your own egoistic emotions that have run wild is like reining in a fierce horse. This is the Dharma of kindness."

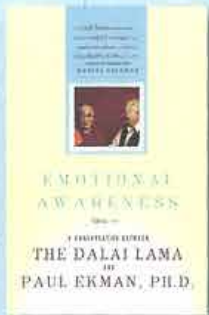
The Buddha looked at his disciples and continued: "A heavenly god who is used to enjoying exceptional pleasures and powers could restrain his anger and extol kindness and gentleness. Shouldn't all of you be even more good-natured since you are cultivating spiritually? You must really learn from this example of god King Sakka of the Heaven of Thirty-three!"

*To resolve hostility by being angry is like adding oil to fire – it will never cease. Only when the cool water of compassion is sprinkled would the flame of anger be doused.*



# READ

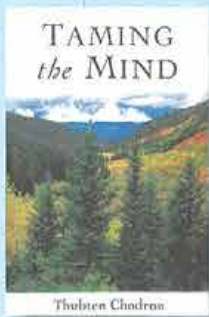
Embark on a transformative journey towards understanding the mind and our emotions



## > Emotional Awareness

A conversation between The Dalai Lama & Paul Ekman

*Emotional Awareness* demonstrates how someone who has a highly cultivated emotional balance can have a calming effect even on difficult people whom he comes in contact with. The book gives precious information in a scientific manner on dealing with emotional turbulence caused by anger, resentment and hatred. Developing an outlook in which you fully realise the interconnected nature of life helps you to cognitively reframe life's situations. This, in turns, fosters compassion, empathy, forgiveness and a vast space in your heart, thereby bringing about greater emotional awareness and balance. Priced at S\$24.00 from Awareness Place.



## > Taming the Mind

By Ven Thubten Chodron

The essence of Buddhist philosophy and psychology is explained in clear and simple language in this book, which gives us practical mind-training tools we can use in our daily lives for deeper self-understanding and better relationships with others. It gives simple guidelines on how we can take responsibility for our lives, and describes how our heart and mind, not the external environment, is the ultimate true source of our happiness. Get it from Awareness Place for S\$27.10.

# HEARD

Enjoy and Flow with these Intimate, Poetic Melodies

## > In the Enchanted Garden

By Kevin Kern

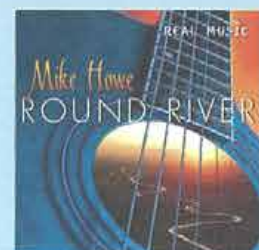
Tender, calming and intimate. Listening to this album is just like having a very warm tête-à-tête with a close good friend you have known since childhood. It puts you very much at ease with its selection of graceful melodies articulately expressed through the piano. Pure, beautiful and emotionally rich. Track six is especially poignant. Available at Awareness Place for \$22.90.



## > Round River

By Mike Howe

Inspired by the never-ending cycle of nature, Mike Howe composed and created this album of lovely, heartfelt guitar melodies conveying a world that is nourished by love, spirituality, creativity, community, sustainable living and healing of all on Earth. Soft, flowy and gentle, yet moderately upbeat & catchy. Buy it from Awareness Place at S\$22.90.





When we experience pleasant feelings,  
emotional attachment ensues,  
and when that pleasant feeling subsides,  
craving arises, the desire to experience it again.  
The nature of this mind is dissatisfaction;  
it disturbs our mental peace  
because its nature is agitation.

When we experience unpleasant feelings,  
We automatically dislike  
and want to get rid of them;  
aversion arises, again disturbing our mental peace.  
Thus whatever feelings arise...  
they disturb us emotionally  
and there's no balance or equanimity in our minds.

...many of our negative actions are reactions to  
feeling...  
If you look a little deeper, you will find that  
feelings are responsible for all the conflicts in the  
world.  
From two children fighting over a piece of candy  
to two huge nations fighting over their very  
existence,  
what are they fighting for?  
For pleasant feelings.  
Even children too young to speak will fight  
Because they want to feel happy.

By meditating on equanimity –  
all sentient beings are exactly the same  
in wanting happiness and  
not desiring suffering –  
you can learn to eliminate the  
extremes of tremendous attachment to one  
and tremendous attachment to the other.  
In this way you can easily  
keep your mind balanced and healthy.  
– *Lama Yeshe*

To practise the Four Noble Truths,  
you yourself have to touch deeply  
the things that bring you peace and joy.  
When you do, you realise that  
walking on the Earth is a miracle.  
We can put an end to our suffering  
just by realising that our suffering  
is not worth suffering for!

How many people kill themselves  
because of rage and despair?  
In that moment,  
they do not see  
the vast happiness that is available.  
Mindfulness puts an end  
to such a limited perspective.  
Don't run away from things  
that are unpleasant...  
Embrace your suffering, smile to it,  
and discover the source of happiness  
that is right there within it...  
The Buddha said,  
"The moment you know how  
your suffering came to be,  
you are already on the path  
of release from it."  
...Learn the art of cultivating joy.  
– *Thich Nhat Hanh*





**Afflictions:** Another name for negative or disturbing emotions, also known as kleshas. The three main emotional obscurations are passion or attachment; aggression or anger; and ignorance or delusion. The five kleshas are the above three plus pride and envy or jealousy.

**Amitabha (Amida, Amita, Amitayus):** Amitabha is the most commonly used name for the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. A transhistorical Buddha venerated by all Mahayana schools particularly, Pure Land. Presides over the Western Pure Land (Land of Ultimate Bliss), where anyone can be reborn through utterly sincere recitation of His name, particularly at the time of death. Amitabha Sutra is one of the three cardinal Pure Land Sutras.

**Anapanasati Sutta:** This is a discourse (sutta) that details the Buddha's instruction on using the breath (anapana) as a focus for mindfulness (sati) meditation. The discourse lists sixteen objects on which one may meditate in order to bear insight and understanding into the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipatthana), the Seven Factors of Awakening (Bojjhngas), and ultimately Nirvana.

**Attachment:** Attachments are what keep us turning on the wheel of rebirth. In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering: From craving [attachment] springs grief, from craving springs fear; For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear. (Dhammapada) Becoming enlightened is nothing other than severing all our attachments. What is meant by "attachment"? It is the investing of mental or emotional energy in an "object". We can become attached to people, things, experiential states, and our own thoughts and preconceptions. In Buddhist teachings attachments are usually divided into two general categories: attachments to self and attachments to dharmas. For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment.

**Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva:** Guanyin; the Bodhisattva who personifies the perfect Compassion of all Buddhas, who hears and heeds the cries of the world.

**Aversion:** Exaggerated wanting to be separated from someone or something.

**Bodhicitta:** The aspiration to help all beings attain True Happiness by becoming Buddhas, by being Bodhisattvas.

**Bodhisattva:** One who aspires to save all beings from suffering, while saving oneself.

**Buddha:** An aspect of the Triple Gem - The Awakened or Enlightened One. A Buddha is one who has attained liberation from all suffering, attaining True Happiness, Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Compassion, among all other virtues for the sake of helping all sentient beings. "The Buddha" refers to the historical Shakyamuni or Gautama Buddha, who is the founder of Buddhism in our world.

**Compassion:** The quality that makes us aspire to help others with no selfish intention; the ending of selfishness.

**Dharma:** An aspect of the Triple Gem - the teachings of the Buddha or the general teachings of Buddhism.

**Enlightenment:** The realisation of the reality of all things as they truly are. True Happiness is the result.

**Equanimity:** The calm and balanced state of mind of not being affected by attachment or aversion to anything.

**Five Precepts:** The basic guidelines of moral conduct - not killing, not stealing, not having sexual misconduct, not lying and not taking intoxicants.

**Four Noble Truths:** 1. Life is full of dissatisfactory experiences - ageing, sickness, separation, death etc 2. Causes of dissatisfactory experiences - craving, aversion and ignorance 3. Life can be without dissatisfaction - by attaining Enlightenment or Nirvana 4. The path leading to the end of dissatisfactions - The Noble Eightfold path.

**Geshe:** A scholar who has attained a doctorate in Buddhist studies. This usually takes fifteen to twenty years to achieve.

**Ignorance:** The quality of lacking Wisdom, not knowing the reality of all things. Same as 'delusion'.

**Impermanence:** All compounded things are constantly changing, as a result or effect of changing causes and conditions. All living and non-living elements are thus subject to decay and renewal.

**Interdependence:** Also called dependent origination or conditioned arising. The principle that nothing exists independently, but comes into existence only on dependency of various previous causes and conditions. In other words, a phenomenon exists on condition that the other exists; it has on condition that others have; it extinguishes on condition that others extinguish; it has not on condition that others have not.

**Karma:** The moral law of cause and effect which states that what we experience is the result of what we had done, that what we do will result in what we will experience.

**Koan:** A brief anecdote recording an exchange between master and disciple or a master's enlightenment experience. Koans are used to bring a student to realisation or to help clarify his enlightenment.

**Lama:** Spiritual teacher. An honorary title in Tibetan Buddhism given to one who has completed particular scholastic and yogic training. It is possible to renounce one's monkhood without renouncing one's lama status, for the purposes of marriage.

**Liberation:** State after removing the defilements and karma which cause uncontrolled rebirth in cyclic existence.

**Loving-kindness:** The quality which makes us wish for the happiness and well-being of others. 'Metta' in Pali language.

**Mahayana:** The dominant Buddhist tradition of East Asia that emphasises on the Bodhisattva ideal.

**Mantra:** Prescribed syllables (in Sanskrit) to protect the mind from defilements. They express the essence of specific energies. Recitation of mantras is always done with specific visualisations.

**Meditation:** A practice to habituate ourselves to positive and realistic states of mind.

**Mindfulness:** An aspect of the 'Noble Eightfold Path' - the quality that enables us to remember, and keep our awareness and attention on what is beneficial to one and all in terms of thoughts, speech and actions.

**Merits:** Blessings, positive potential. Imprints on the mindstream of positive actions, leading to future happiness.

**Nirvana:** Nirvana is a Sanskrit term that is interpreted in various ways: 1) cessation, or extinction, referring to the elimination of the afflictions at the time of enlightenment, 2) freedom from desire; and 3) no longer either coming into being or ceasing to be. 'Nibbana' in Pali language.

**Noble Eightfold Path:** A systematic and complete formula to rid dissatisfaction and attain true happiness and peace by following Perfect Speech, Perfect Action, Perfect Livelihood, Perfect Effort, Perfect Mindfulness, Perfect Meditation, Perfect Understanding, Perfect Thought (pls read Be A Lamp Upon Yourself published by KMSPKS for detailed info).

**Perfection:** Refers to the six practices, the perfection of which ferries one beyond the sea of suffering and mortality to Nirvana.

**Puja:** Ceremony/act of worship, offering.

**Pureland:** A world without defilements created by a Buddha out of Compassion, for sentient beings to seek birth in, to perfect the practice of the Dharma. The best known being Sukhavati Pureland created by Amitabha Buddha.

**Rebirth:** The continual cycle of birth and death.

**Refuge:** In the Buddhist context to take refuge means to accept the Buddha and the Buddhist teachings as the path one wants to take.

**Rinpoche:** An honorific used in Tibetan Buddhism to mean "precious one".

**Samsara:** This world of rebirth and suffering. Also known as Saha world.

**Sangha:** An aspect of the Triple Gem - the holy community of monks and nuns.

**Sentient Beings:** Living beings with feelings in the six Samsara realms of hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods and gods.

**Shamatha:** Tranquility meditation. This is basic sitting meditation in which one usually follows the breath while observing the workings of the mind while sitting in the cross-legged posture. The main purpose of shamatha meditation is to settle or tame the mind so that it will stay where one places it.

**Six Realms of Existence:** Also called the Six Paths of Rebirth, it refers to the six categories of living beings who are not enlightened. They are 1) Gods, 2) Humans, 3) Asuras, 4) Animals, 5) Ghosts, 6) Hell-dwellers. The particular category that one finds oneself reborn in depends upon one's karma at the time of rebirth.

**Stupa:** A pagoda for the remains of the Buddha, whether relics of bones or scriptures.

**Suffering:** The physical and mental feeling of dissatisfaction.

**Sutra(s):** The recorded teachings of the Buddha. Spelt as Sutta in Pali language.

**Threefold Refuge:** Taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

**Triple Gem:** The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

**Venerable:** An honorific addressing of a member of the Sangha.

**Zen:** A school of Buddhism. Also known as Chan.

**Wisdom:** The understanding or discernment based on the direct realisation of the Four Noble Truths, Impermanence, Interdependent Origination, Non-self and Emptiness. The Buddha taught that all things are impermanent, arising and passing away, subject to change, and that knowing this — not in a rational, but empirical manner — is wisdom.