

The SnowFlower Sun

January/February 2007

WHEEL(S) OF THE DHARMA

Erin Hanusa

One morning this last summer, my son and I were walking to our favorite coffee shop. It's only a block away from our house, but on any walk with a toddler, traversing a block can stretch into a long journey.

We'd recently bought our son a tricycle. The trike had a long handle an adult could use to push, to help a kid whose feet didn't yet reach the pedals. But on this particular morning, my son didn't want to ride; he wanted to *push*. Feeling slightly dismayed—the handle was for the adult, not the kid—I let him. I saw the rigidity in my thinking, but the feeling of wrongness persisted. After all, I had searched Craigslist and several stores for a tricycle I could push, and my anticipation of his smile as I pushed him on the tricycle persisted.

But I let Dario push. We moved slowly across each sidewalk square, when we weren't stopping to examine a caterpillar or tiny rock. I sighed heavily. "Should I just take this home and carry you?" I asked him. No, he wanted to push.

I asked again about twenty paces later. "Why don't you want to ride?" I whined.

"I want to push it," he replied, jovially.

We walked some more. "Come ON!" I said. "Let's go! Get off that step. Don't you want to play with the toys at the coffee shop? Do you want me to carry you?"

He gave a definitive two-year-old answer. "I want to do it *by myself*."

I looked off into the distance, past a tree, at the roof of a nearby laundromat. I felt pained, heavy, just wishing I could be sitting with a cup of coffee in my hand, reading a magazine, while my son played on his own.

Then something happened. Like a drop of rain hitting my face, a realization: all my sorrows, my bad feelings, all my frustrations were wrapped up in expectations. The trouble had started with the idea of Dario riding the tricycle while I pushed, and my frustration had only intensified with the vision I had of myself lazily drinking coffee. These expectations encapsulated what I thought would make Dario happy, what I thought would make me happy. But without that expectation, that pre-fab definition of what "should be" or what I "liked," *this* moment could be enjoyable. In fact, if I could let that image go, this moment had nothing wrong in it. Dario, in his way, had tried to show me this in the beginning. Now I understood. My son was contentedly pushing his tricycle, we were walking together on a calm day, and I had nowhere else in the world to be.

I stood, amazed, drinking in the feeling. Though I wouldn't have been able to put my finger on the word, what I felt was liberation.

That first drop of rain was the beginning of a shower of awareness. Although I realized even as it happened that this experience of embracing the moment was not new, it was profound. I'd heard the phrase "be here now," but the only thing I understood was that I was supposed to do it. I didn't know what it felt like. Or what *here* really meant—not the here in your head, or in your desires, but in reality.

Because of that feeling, I embarked on a search for understanding and I started coming to SnowFlower. I knew I would find things I could connect to that extraordinary moment, and I knew that more than anything I wanted to learn how to feel that way, to be in the moment, all the time.

Most importantly, that experience helped me understand what meditation has to do with being in the present moment. Watching my breath is not something to practice while hoping for a lightning bolt of serenity; it is a lesson in observing whatever is happening to me, in touching reality instead of perception.

JANUARY CALENDAR

Tuesday (7:00 – 8:30 PM)	Friday (7:00 – 9:00 PM)
1/2 Practice Basics Led by Mary Michal	1/5 14 Mindfulness Trainings Overview and Recitation Led by Cheri Maples
Saturday, January 6 6:30 p.m. SnowFlower Holiday Party Jim Roseberry and Susan O’Leary’s home, 2220 West Lawn Ave. There will be a sit followed by a potluck. Bring a dish to pass and plate and utensils for yourself. Please, no food requiring bowls. Call 256-0506 with questions.	
1/9 Guided Meditation Led by Kathleen Hoag	1/12 Mindfulness Trainings 1, 2 and 3 Led by Heather Mann
Monday, January 15 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Half-Day of Mindfulness at Jane Peckham’s Home, 6606 Offshore Dr. Contact Jane at 829-2466 with questions	
1/16 No Death, No Fear Led by Kathleen Hoag	1/19 Mindfulness Trainings 4, 5, and 6 Led by Susan Spiro
1/23 Opening the Heart of the Cosmos: Insights on the Lotus Sutra Led by Don Katz	1/26 Applying the Mindfulness Trainings Led by Susan O’Leary and Jim Roseberry
1/30 14 Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Led by David Haskin	

MEETING TIMES & LOCATIONS

We meet Tuesdays (7–8:30pm) in the Wesley Room of the Trinity United Methodist Church, 1123 Vilas Ave. (2 blocks west of Park St.). Enter through parking lot door on right (West) side of building. Go up the stairs, following the arrows to the Wesley Room. Note: a Greeter will be available until 7:15 p.m., after which time the doors will be locked per church policy.

We also meet Fridays (7–9 pm) in the Sanctuary of the Friends Meetinghouse, 1704 Roberts Court, near Camp Randall Stadium. Please leave shoes in the hall. For both meetings, please try to arrive at 6:55pm (earlier if you can help set up) so that we can begin our sits in quiet.

SANGHA WEB SITE, E-MAIL LIST & NEWSLETTER

The SnowFlower Sangha web site is <http://SnowFlower.org>. You can subscribe to the SnowFlower listserv on the web or by sending an email to SnowFlower-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Contact David Haskin with any questions (608-924-3060 or questions@SnowFlower.org). Mike Winckler maintains the web site. He can be reached at mwinckler@charter.net and mwinckler@matcmadison.edu. The SnowFlower Sun is published bimonthly and is edited by Erin Hanusa. Email Erin at erinhanusa@yahoo.com if you have announcements, articles, or other writing for the newsletter.

From Zen Keys by Thich Nhat Hanh:

The moment of awakening is marked by an outburst of laughter. But this is not the laughter of someone who suddenly acquires a great fortune; neither is it the laughter of one who has won a great victory. It is, rather, the laughter of one who, after having painfully searched for something for a long time, finds it one morning in the pocket of his coat.

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

Tuesday (7:00 – 8:30 PM)	Friday (7:00 – 9:00 PM)
	2/2 Mindfulness Trainings 8 and 9 Led by Steven Spiro
2/6 Practice Basics Led by Larry Mandt	2/9 Mindfulness Trainings 10 and 11 Led by David Haskin
2/13 Touching the Earth Led by Heather Mann	2/16 Mindfulness Trainings 12 and 13 Led by Mary Michal
Saturday, February 17 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Half-Day of Mindfulness at Jane Peckham's home, 6606 Offshore Dr. Contact Jane at 829-2466 for more info.	
2/20 The Power of Prayer Led by Larry Mandt	2/23 Mindfulness Training 7 Led by Efrat Livny
Monday, February 26 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Half-Day of Mindfulness at Jane Peckham's home, 6606 Offshore Dr. Contact Jane at 829-2466 for more info.	
2/27 Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation Led by Mary Gallagher	

NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITY: January 26 and 27, 2007

The Madison Buddhist Peace Fellowship is sponsoring two days of practice and training in Nonviolent Communication (NVC) presented by Lucy Leu, one of the foremost teachers in NVC nationally as well as a long-time Buddhist practitioner. NVC is a practical and compatible practice tool that can help us with wise & loving speech.

For registration information, contact Melissa at thielman@tds.net. If you have additional questions, contact Jill at j.lynch@charter.net.

DOWNTOWN JOB OPPORTUNITY

Dynamic professional woman has job openings for high-energy, physically strong people. Must be able to take verbal direction. **All times mentioned below are flexible.**

Duties as follows:

- Swimming support: early mornings (5-9 a.m.), 1-3 mornings per week, plus one 6-8 a.m. weekend shift every three weeks. Must be female to accompany into women's locker room. Valid driver's license and good driving record required. Van provided.
- Personal care bedtime shift: 11 p.m. – 12:30 a.m., 1-3 nights per week plus one weekend every three weeks.
- Other shifts available.

Call or email Karen at 608-255-7728 or mediate@chorus.net.

NON-RESIDENTIAL RETREAT OPPORTUNITY IN MILWAUKEE

The Mindfulness Community of Milwaukee is offering a meditation retreat Thursday, January 11 through Saturday, January 13 from 11:00 a.m to 5 p.m. each day. You may participate on any day, for as long or as short as you like. The retreat offers periods of silent sitting and walking meditation. Basic instruction on these core practices will be provided if needed at the start of the morning sessions. There will be no dharma talks, only short readings from Thay or other masters of the Theravada and Mahayana traditions.

There is no charge for the retreat, but contributions to the Mindfulness Center are appreciated. Please bring your own lunch, or join the group for lunch at a local restaurant. Tea, cookies, and fruit will be provided during the scheduled breaks. MCM is located at 2126 E. Locust in Milwaukee. Contact Paul Brodwin at brodwin@uwm.edu if you have questions.

MINDFULNESS CLASS

Cheri Maples

SnowFlower Sangha sponsored four thirty-minute beginner meditation classes in October and November that were attended by approximately 12 people. We covered the following topics: an explanation of sangha and an invitation to sangha; instructions on sitting meditation, walking meditation, and eating meditation; and how to incorporate mindfulness into your daily life.

I enjoyed leading the classes and meeting the people who attended them. I believe the classes were helpful, and some new people started attending sangha as a result. I would like to see us sponsor these classes again in the future. I would, however, suggest that they be an hour rather than a half-hour in length. An hour would allow for more detailed instruction, longer meditations, more dialogue, and more time for questions without feeling rushed.

METTA COLLECTIVE

The Metta Collective is open for listening. Contact Savitri, Jim, David L., Jane, Karuna, Erin, or others as you feel called.

A GENTLE REMINDER

Please come to sangha as scent-free as possible as there are members who are sensitive to perfumes, colognes, and scented laundry products. Sitting scent-free supports everyone's wellness.

POET'S CORNER

RECIPE FOR A PRESENT

Gently unbind the ribbons, the flashy glory of lesser seen attachments.
Cut the wrapping of illusion—precisely, cleanly.

Know that what is wasted here is only compost for a lovelier flower.

Behold.

What can I do with my attention, my compassion, my understanding
to show how much I treasure you?

Wrap the Present with awareness.
Weave a thread of concentration.

Breathe.

--Sarah Carroll