

The SnowFlower Sun

January and February 2014

COMPASSION

From a talk by Cheri Maples

Compassion is a quivering of the heart in response to suffering. It invites us to cross the divide that separates 'us' from 'them'. With regard to those we love, compassion is not hard to find. But nowhere is the sense of self more solid than in the midst of the fear and anger felt when we're faced with what are seen as inexplicable acts of harm and injustice. Then, it can feel almost impossible to find forgiveness and understanding.

Compassion does not require us to give up our quest for justice; it should not be mistaken for the passivity that enables abuse or injustice to continue. Nor does it require us to abandon our anger, but it does require awareness of our anger, awareness of our own suffering and fear, and an intention and attempt to engage in action that won't cause further harm. True compassion is not forged at a distance from pain but within it.

If finding compassion is often not easy, the alternative – living with anger, resentment, and alienation in our heart – is much more difficult. Without awareness, such negative emotions become the real life sentences for many of us. Our anger does not have to end our connection with others. Anger can be the beginning of abandonment or the beginning of connection. The compassionate are not immune to suffering, but have simply refused to follow the pathways of disconnection.

We don't have to be perfect to be compassionate. The question is how do we receive our own mind and heart? If we can listen to ourselves in moments of resentment and judgment, we will be able to extend compassion to others, whose rage, fear and confusion are no different from our own. If questioned and explored, our anger and fear are invitations, not obstacles, to compassion. These painful feelings invite investigation, understanding, and tenderness.

We are always beginners in the art of compassion, since life is sure to present us with some new encounter with pain for which we feel unprepared. "And this too." We are asked to soften and stay present moment by moment. Compassion can thus be seen as a response to the present moment and how we receive it.



Meditation is the highest form of prayer. In it you are so close to God that you don't need to say a thing. It's just great to be together.

Swami Chetananda

January February Calendar In the new year we return with renewed minds and hearts to the exploration of basic practice concepts, continuing our study of the Six Paramitas and the Four Brahmaviharas. In addition, the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings will be recited on both a Tuesday and a Friday evening. A discussion of aspirancy to the Order of Interbeing and a tea social are likewise on the schedule for both sangha evenings.

January 2014

Tuesday Sangha Meetings	Friday Sangha Meetings
	January 3 6:15 <i>Intro to SnowFlower</i> - Heather Mann Sympathic Joy – Maureen Brady
January 7 6:15 Kalyana Mitta Info Session Overview of the 6 Paramitas – Suzanne Kilkus	January 10 6:15 Kalyana Mitta Info Session The Paramamita of Morality (Ethics) – Heather Mann
Saturday, January 18 - The Annual Winter Potluck, 6pm Hosted by Susan O’Leary and Jim Roseberry, 2220 West Lawn Ave (near Friends Meetinghouse) We will begin with a short sit. Please, for your dish to pass, bring something that can be served on a plate. Bowls in shorter supply.	
January 14 Extended Sit and Tea Social – Tom Loomis	January 17 The Paramita of Wisdom – Bruce Froehke
January 21 Overview of the 4 Establishments of Mindfulness – Don Katz	January 24 Extended sit and Tea Social – Tom Loomis
January 28 Overview of the 4 Brahmaviharas – Mary Michal	January 31 Metta (Loving Kindness) - Mary Michal

Wednesday Daytime Sangha Meetings are held weekly. Information regarding location and topic will be sent to the listserve every Sunday.

Sunday Morning Sangha Meetings are held weekly. Information regarding location and topic will be sent to the listserve every Wednesday.

"Be Still and Know: Life Illumined by Meditation". Day of Mindfulness, February 2, 2014 at the Evanston Ecology Center with Jack and Laurie Lawlor. More information, Lisejacobson@comcast.net.



Greetings from **Wild Peace Sangha, Viroqua**. *Wild Peace* started over a year ago, meeting weekly. My love and longing for SnowFlower inspired me to see if others would be interested in forming a Buddhist practice community. With deep joy I can report that 2103 has been an amazing year with dedicated and creative facilitators, core participants, a lovely space, the support of SnowFlower, and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Our group evolved to be loosely rooted in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. On behalf of *Wild Peace*, I extend a deep bow to your presence; as SnowFlower seeds are sprouting in ever widening circles. We welcome you to the Driftless: Sundays @ The Ark, 401 E. Jefferson Street, Viroqua, 10am – 12pm. Peace and joy, JiLL (j.lynch@charter.net for more information.)

February 2014

Tuesday Sangha Meetings	Friday Sangha Meetings
February 4 6:15 <i>Intro to SnowFlower</i> – Tom Loomis The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings Recitation - Gloria Green	February 7 The Paramita of Energy - Susan O’Leary
February 11 Overview of the Five Remembrances - Steven Spiro	February 14 The Fourteen Mindfulness Recitations – Jim Roseberry
February 18 A Surprising Aspirancy – Elizabeth Galewski	February 21 – Questions and Answers with Dharma Teacher Cheri Maples
February 25 Meditation Basics – David Haskin	February 28 The Paramita of Meditation – David Haskin

SnowFlower Sangha Cancellation Policy

In case of inclement weather, an email will be sent to the listserv by 3:00 pm the day of sangha.

Information Sessions on Kalyana Mitta Groups with Tom Loomis

January 7th & 10th, Friends Meeting House, 6:15-6:55. Kalyana Mitta means spiritual friends. Snowflower Sangha has several KM groups. These groups can provide individuals with support in deepening their practice.

The Sacred Sangha

Hopes of each of us being happy, healthy, whole,
liberated from suffering

Two, three, or four sanghas

As many sanghas as there are individuals, 7.12 billion sanghas

Or one sangha

One deep within ourselves

and one without

One SnowFlower Sangha

One vast planet, world, cosmic sangha

Split the differences to find the mutually-shared truths



Join the parts together into the interrelated, coexisting whole

Experience, contemplate this spiritual phenomenon -

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

One complete, harmonious union

One peace-loving, selfless, egoless, nameless sangha

Me-and-my sangha, you and your sangha

Apparently separate individuals, apparently separate sanghas

Compassionately, consciously interbeing, intercaring, interloving

Pleasing the Buddha One Sacred Sangha

Within and without

by Laura Karl

The Stress Is Optional

From a talk by Elizabeth Galewski

All spring of 2012, I had been working on combining athletics with mindfulness practice and thought it was going very well. But during the crippling heat of a half marathon in May – a week after sitting a meditation retreat – I stopped running during a race and started walking - for the first time in my career as an athlete. I felt like I had stupidly tried to combine mindfulness with athletics, and failed. During the next few months I did some reading and learned about teachers whose approach to spirituality focused on athletics. Yet, my confidence had been shaken and I still wondered. In September of 2012 I was signed up to race in my first Olympic distance triathlon. That means swimming nearly a mile, biking 28 miles, and then running 6.2 miles. But I had a strained tendon and didn't think I would be able to complete the bike, much less even start the run.

I went down to Lake Geneva for the race with the idea that I would have a spectacular swim: open water with thousands of others, waves that could rise to three feet tall, the sunrise on the horizon. Certain that I wouldn't be able to finish the triathlon, I had no reason to stress out about it. So, instead of the usual anxiety before a race, I got a decent amount of sleep the night before. In the morning I set up as though I hoped to finish, but I didn't really. Without that hope, I was strangely unafraid. I resolved to enjoy every minute of the race that I could. Cutting through the water like catamaran, at the end of the swim I ran to the transition area. I didn't know how long I would last, but I would at least get on my bike. I immediately cast my awareness down to my strained tendon. How did it feel? Fine. After a few miles, it felt uncomfortable, but not to the point that I needed to pull off the course.

I practiced moment to moment awareness, constantly monitoring the tendon. The miles sped by. I kept monitoring. Moment to moment awareness. I could always pull off if I had to. The tendon, uncomfortable and tight, was holding. That was when I got my first inkling that I might actually finish the race. Running didn't aggravate the tendon – only biking did. My legs churned through the miles with liquid ease. A few more miles – monitoring, monitoring -- and I saw the finish line right in front of me. Calculating, I figured out that I would have to run slower than my slowest pace ever to avoid having a time far faster than my wildest ambitions! Two main lessons about mindfulness practice from that day. Abandoning hope can be the gateway to freedom. Stress is optional. I don't have to choose it. Peace is also a choice.



For the New Year...

May I be safe and protected. May I be peaceful and happy.

May I be healthy and strong. May I have ease of well-being, and accept all the conditions of the world.

May I love myself just as I am. May I sense my worthiness and well-being.

May I trust this world. May I hold myself in compassion.

May I meet the suffering and ignorance of others with compassion.

- Thich Nhat Hanh