



The SnowFlower Sun

March / April 2018

MINDFULNESS OF WHAT?

From a recent talk by a SnowFlower

Since early on in my practice I have meditated with Thay's wonderful breath gatha "In, Out, Deep, Slow, Calm, Ease, Smile, Release, Present Moment, Wonderful Moment", yet I realized only relatively recently that these phrases are a condensation of the Buddha's sutra on the 16 exercises of mindful breathing! Another great example of how Thay packages ancient teachings neatly and simply for us in the West. Now, with more experience reading and living with the Dharma, I see a deep connection between the last phrases, "Present Moment, Wonderful Moment", and the essence of Buddhism. That is the topic for tonight's talk.

As we know, Thay assures us over and over again that mindfulness is always mindfulness of *something* – and true mindfulness is the awareness of the impermanent, non-self, nature of whatever the object of our mindfulness is. That is an answer to "Mindfulness of What?" And it means seeing impermanence in everything we look at! When we are mindful of our breath, we take into consideration that our breath is impermanent. Mindful of a tree, we dwell on its impermanence. For a long time, I thought of impermanence in an external way: leaves last for the summer, are destined to fall, as everything in this world is destined to change. But this view of impermanence still assumes that the leaf is an entity with a reality of its own, at least until it changes into something else.

But there is a deeper reality beneath the appearance that we usually take for granted. The leaf is like a rainbow or a river: a concept that describes part of reality but leads us astray at the same time. The rainbow is there not as an "it", but as an interaction of sunlight and cloud droplets in constant motion. The river is there, but as an action as much as a thing. "You can't dip your toe in the same river twice" is the saying. Realizing impermanence is realizing that everything is like a rainbow or a river.

This may be over our heads, hard for us to "get", since it's not a matter of understanding some concepts. It is about living with them, and remembering that what we assume [about what we perceive in the world] is not the full picture. Thay calls these views, these oversimplifications of reality, delusions. We usually live in ignorance, but through mindfulness we move in the direction of awakening little by little each day.

Two months ago, I began reading Thay's *Understanding our Mind*, a book very much in line with this topic. He says, 'The teachings of impermanence and non-self are not doctrines or subjects for a philosophical discussion. They are instruments for meditation, keys to help us unlock the door of reality. ... We must learn to use them ... Practice looking deeply and touch the nature of interdependence and interbeing, in reality. ... When we live in mindfulness, everything takes place in the concentration of looking deeply. When our concentration is [still] weak, we might see their interdependent nature for a short time, but we soon fall back to seeing things as permanent and having a separate self. But with strong and sturdy concentration, we can continually see the nature of interbeing of things within and around us.'

How does this relate to "present moment, wonderful moment"? Thay explains that the illusion of permanence is based on our perceiving a series of instances. A steady stream of instances gives rise to the appearance of permanence. Just as a motion picture is composed of individual still photos!

(Continued on pg 2)

March 2018

Sundays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Fridays
			3/2 Be an Island unto Yourself Susan O'Leary
3/4 The Miracle of Mindfulness Celeste Robins	3/6 Intro to Sangha Zach Smith Yoda and the Zen of Everything Celeste Robins	3/7 Answers from the Heart Host: Amy Krohn	3/9 Ethics and the Eightfold Path David Haskin
3/11 The Miracle of Mindfulness Gerri Gurman	3/13 Store Consciousness and TSA at Midway Airport Jim Roseberry	3/14 Answers from the Heart Host: Amy Krohn	3/16 The Better Way to Catch a Snake Rosebud Sparer
3/18 The Miracle of Mindfulness Tod Highsmith	3/20 My Path to Snowflower Adam Kim Amanda Pool	3/21 Answers from the Heart Host: Amy Krohn	3/23 The 14 MTs Bonnie Trudell
3/25 The Miracle of Mindfulness Pam Moran	3/27 The Seven Factors of Enlightenment Walt Keough	3/28 Answers from the Heart Host: Amy Krohn	3/30 Store Consciousness and TSA at Midway Airport Jim Roseberry

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Send an email listserv@snowflower.org, or Ann Varda at annvarda@gmail.com

MINDFULNESS OF WHAT?

(continued from pg 1)

My use of the gatha has now evolved beyond just the 'wonderful moment' part (which is that I have all the elements I need to be happy right now). Now, from time to time, I see that the present moment is composed of many instances of still photos that come together in my eyes. I see that the present moment is literally, in reality, all that there is, and this is amazing, "full of wonder"

I will end with this wonderful quote that summarizes why I am practicing mindfulness. '... the Buddha helped us to see that enlightenment is not a permanent, everlasting experience or an attainable state, because living experiences are continuously changing. Rather, enlightenment is an act ... of being fully conscious of what is experienced in the moment. With daily training we will have enough strength to be free from entanglement in the stream of experience. ... We live deeply in the present moment, fully recognizing the present consequences due to past conditions and anticipating future outcomes, but we are not caught either in the past or in the future.' This reflects my partial understanding and is certain to be revised in the future.



April 2018

Sundays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Fridays
4/1 The Miracle of Mindfulness Gerri Gurman	4/3 Wisdom of the Eightfold Path Steven Spiro	4/4 No Death, No Fear Host: Amy Krohn	4/6 Intro to Sangha Bonnie Trudell Wisdom of the Eightfold Path Steven Spiro
4/8 The Miracle of Mindfulness Celeste Robins	4/10 Concentration Gloria Green	4/11 No Death, No Fear Host: Amy Krohn	4/13 The Five Ways to Put an End to Anger Zach Smith
4/15 The Miracle of Mindfulness Tod Highsmith	4/17 The 5 MTs with Panel Discussion Zach Smith	4/18 No Death, No Fear Host: Amy Krohn	4/20 Building Mindfulness: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness Leah Owens
4/22 The Miracle of Mindfulness Gerri Gurman	4/24 Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness: Objects of Mind Lisa Glueck	4/25 The 5MTs Host: Amy Krohn	4/27 Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness: Objects of Mind Lisa Glueck
4/29 The Miracle of Mindfulness Celeste Robins			

SPECIAL EVENTS – MARCH/APRIL 2018

SNOWFLOWER SANGHA SPRING DAY OF MINDFULNESS

“THE JOY OF ENGAGED PRACTICE”

Saturday, March 17, 2018 - Holy Wisdom Monastery

Email Celeste to participate - celestialr@charter.net

SHEPPARD/SPIRO RETREAT

“MINDFULNESS, CONCENTRATION & INSIGHT MEDITATION AS A SPIRITUAL PATH”

April 12-15, 2018 - Techny Towers Retreat Center, Techny, IL

Contact Mark (847) 927-9427 or Steve (847) 644-2389

JACK AND LAURIE LAWLOR RETREAT

“NOURISHING THE EARTH, NOURISHING OTHERS, NOURISHING OURSELVES”

May 4-6, 2018 - LaSalle Manor Retreat Center, Plano, IL (SF Scholarships Available)

Contact Lynn Bement compostqueen@icloud.com to download applications.

MINDFUL MAN

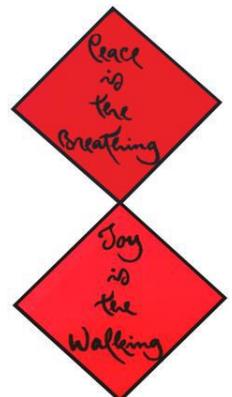
Contact David Haskin dhaskin@gmail.com

PRISON MINDFULNESS VOLUNTEERS

Training and Information Opportunity - Wisconsin Prison Mindfulness Initiative (WPMI)

April 21, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. - First Congregational UCC, 1609 University Ave., Madison

For both existing and new volunteers - RSVP: dhaskin@gmail.com



Compassion is a quivering of the heart in response to suffering which 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.

But compassion does not require us to give up our quest for justice, nor should it be mistaken for the passivity that enables abuse or injustice to continue. Neither does it require us to abandon our anger. It does, however, 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 hearts – is even more difficult. Without awareness, such negative emotions become the real-life sentences for many of us. The compassionate are not immune to suffering, but have simply refused to follow the pathways of disconnection. Our anger does not have to end our connection with others. Anger can be the beginning of abandonment or the beginning of connection.

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. Such 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 again 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. 

Weekly Meetings

Tuesday and Friday Sangha Meetings are held at The Friends Meetinghouse, 1704 Roberts Court, Madison, WI. 7 – 8:30pm.

Wednesday Daytime Sangha Meetings are from 1:30-3 pm every Wednesday at the home of Amy Krohn during the winter months. Specific information regarding this location and topic will be sent to the listserv every Sunday. For info, contact Mary Gallagher (608) 274-2769. Wednesday Sangha includes sitting and walking meditation, followed by book reading and discussion.

Sunday Morning Sangha Meetings are held at the homes of SnowFlower members from 10 – 11:30 am. Information regarding location and topic will be sent to the listserv every Wednesday. Or, call: Tom Loomis (608) 334-4532, Finn Enke (608) 238-5929. Sunday Sangha includes sitting & walking meditation followed by dharma sharing and discussion.

SnowFlower Sangha Mentoring Program - It is natural that newcomers to the practice may have questions, and a mentoring relationship supports a newer practitioner by clarifying matters of personal practice and sangha practice. If interested, contact Susan Pearsall, (608) 238-5929. The logistics of the mentoring relationship (duration, frequency of contact, etc.) are up to the mentor and mentee.