

# *The SnowFlower Sun*

July/August 2017

**REVERENCE FOR LIFE: the First Training**

**from a talk by David Haskin**

The Mindfulness Trainings give us an opportunity to look deeply, not just at the obvious. We see how Thay has taken the original precept which was very simply stated - - I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures – and expanded it to take into account how harming can lead to suffering and how we can train ourselves, using the practice, not to cause suffering and to alleviate suffering.

Don't Kill. I think most of us pretty much get that. But what about the causes and conditions within each of us that lead to killing? The First Training talks about Interbeing, the truth that everything is radically interconnected through time and space. When we don't embrace interbeing, we feel separate, and when we act out of that place of separateness it causes suffering since we are locked in dualistic thinking – I am me, you are you.

When we feel separate, a sense of entitlement can easily arise: I want this, I will take it. I don't want that, so I will eliminate it; if I don't get it, you will, so I'd better get it. What Thay calls "discriminative thinking" can arise: I am good or bad; I am deserving or undeserving; you are good or bad. It is these attitudes, Thay teaches, that manifest in the world as violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism, and manifest in each person as anger, distance or lack of presence, entitlement.

Thay tells us that the way out of separateness and to interbeing is compassion. Cultivating compassion leads us to embrace interbeing. With compassion there is no longer a separation. We realize that we suffer and that everybody suffers. Your suffering and my suffering may be different in details but the causes and conditions for each of our suffering, if we go back far enough, are the same. Compassion allows us to turn toward suffering without flinching and with love, i.e., not using our strategies to turn away from our own suffering. When we avoid our own suffering, we are not so concerned with the suffering of others.

In this First Training Thay urges us to commit to not enable killing in our MINDS, for example, not to go automatically to worst-case scenarios and "horribilizing" as monkey-mind would have us do. Before we fight against injustice and killing in the world, we are urged first to look deeply at our own capability for violence. It's very easy to feel satisfaction when "bad guys" are killed. These "bad guys" are people I'm afraid of. In this frame of mind they are separate from me – and so is their suffering. But, looking deeply, I can see that the causes and conditions that led to their suffering are the same that led to my own.

The tools the Buddha has given us take into account that we can't simply force our minds to be different. We must train our minds to be different. That's what the practice does. I love it in prison when an inmate who is practicing mindfulness says something like: 'I'm angry at that guard. He was really nasty to me. But maybe he just had a fight with his wife. I know how I can get when I fight with people I care about...' \* continued on page 4 \*



July 15-Summer Day of Mindfulness, Racine, Led by Jack and Laurie Lawlor,  
Sponsored by Mindfulness Community of Milwaukee [milwmindful@gmail.com](mailto:milwmindful@gmail.com)

"How Do You Meditate?"

We're lucky to be members of a sangha with so many dedicated practitioners. Since sitting meditation is an important part of our practice, during the July/August cycle, we'll be learning about our individual meditation practices. Many members of SnowFlower have deepened their understanding of practices they've learned directly from Thich Nhat Hanh, while others have added study in other traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, Vipassana, Soto Zen and Daoism. We look forward to this opportunity to learn from each other.

### July 2017

Sundays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Fridays
7/2 Host and Lead Celeste Robins  Read & Discuss TNH Good Citizen	7/4 Joe Fishback "Meditation and Facing Lifelong Habits"	7/5  Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise At Farm Zendo	7/7 Rosebud "Smiling to the Organs Practice"
7/9 Host and Lead Gerri Gurman  Read & Discuss TNH Good Citizen	7/11 Intro to Sangha Bonnie Trudell  Gerri "Meditation and Movement"	7/12  Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise At Farm Zendo	7/14 Jon Reed "Quieting My Mind"
7/16 Host and Lead Gerri Gurman  Finish reading & Discussing TNH Good Citizen	7/18 Steven "Body, Breath, and Mind"	7/19  The Sun My Heart  At Farm Zendo	7/21 Jim Roseberry "Investigating My Mind"
7/23 Host and Lead Tod Highsmith & Joan Braune  Begin TNH No Death, No Fear	7/25 Mary Michal "The Embodied Practice of Metta"	7/26  The Sun My Heart  At Farm Zendo	7/28 Mary Michal "The Embodied Practice of Metta"
7/30 Host and Lead Celeste Robins  Read & Discuss TNH No Death, No Fear	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p>July 22- One day retreat led by Peg Syverson - Open Door Zen The Threshold, 2717 Atwood Ave. <a href="mailto:chrisjoe2@att.net">chrisjoe2@att.net</a></p> </div>		

#### 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 and a notice will be posted on the door of the Friends Meetinghouse.

Join the SnowFlower email list by emailing Ann Varda at [annvarda@gmail.com](mailto:annvarda@gmail.com).



August 6-11 "Transforming Our Store Consciousness: Working with Seeds"  
 Mindfulness Community of Milwaukee retreat - Christine Center near Willard WI  
[retreatregistration@milwaukee mindfulness.com](mailto:retreatregistration@milwaukee mindfulness.com)

### August 2017

Sundays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Fridays
	8/1 Lisa Glueck "Meditating with the 16 Exercises in Mindfulness"	8/2 The Five Mindfulness Trainings  At Farm Zendo	8/4 Intro to Sangha Steven Spiro  Lisa Glueck "Meditating with the 16 Exercises in Mindfulness"
8/6 Host and Lead Tod Highsmith & Joan Braune  Read & discuss TNH No Death, No Fear	8/8 Don Katz "Open Awareness"	8/9 The Sun My Heart  At Farm Zendo	8/11 Amy Krohn TBA
8/13 Host and Lead Gerri Gurman  Read & discuss TNH No Death, No Fear	8/15 Jim Roseberry "Investigating My Mind"	8/16 The Sun My Heart  At Farm Zendo	8/18 Susan O'Leary "Silent Illumination and Chan Khong's Heart Practice"
8/20 Host and Lead Pam Moran & Dave Zeman  Read & discuss TNH No Death, No Fear	8/22 Walt Keough "Guided Metta Meditation"	8/23 The Sun My Heart  At Farm Zendo	8/25 David Haskin "Introduction to the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness"
8/27 Host and Lead Gerri Gurman  Recite & discuss 5 Mindfulness Trainings	8/29 Susan O'Leary "Silent Illumination and Chan Khong's Heart Practice"	8/30 The Sun My Heart  At Farm Zendo	Bringing mindfulness to daily life can transform the very moments in which we live our lives, for ourselves and others. Amy Krohn

**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 Farm Zendo, 1834 S. Sharpe's Corner Road, Mt. Horeb. Information regarding location and topic will be sent to the listserve every Sunday. For info, contact Mary Gallagher (608) 274-2769 or Susan Pearsall (608) 238- 5929. Wednesday Sangha includes sitting and walking meditation followed by dharma sharing 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 listserve every Wednesday. Join by emailing [listserv@snowflower.org](mailto:listserv@snowflower.org). Or, call: Tom Loomis (608) 334-4532, Finn Enke (608) 243-7971. Sunday Sangha includes sitting & walking meditation followed by dharma sharing and discussion.



## There is a blessing near the wound.

Ethiopian saying

### TAKING REFUGE IN THE SANGHA

Excerpted from a talk by Steven Spiro

Yesterday I was in Boscobel in the Supermax prison. I counted ten solid steel doors between the inmates and the outside world. Ten. Right now we have a meditation group there, and we have a Buddhist group there. It works like this: we sit in a circle with a bell and we practice. These guys are serious guys – drug lords. They’ve committed homicides, been convicted of serious crimes. And they’re my friends; they’re my Sangha. One of my Sanghas. They know it; I know it. We’re a Sangha.

Now there’s one guy who is fairly new; he’s been in our group for a few months. This man is about 300 pounds and solid muscle. Bald. And he says, “I got serious anger issues. I beat people.” And he’s going on. They call him Jordan. One of the things we do after meditation is we have a check-in. People go around and say what their practice is, where they’re at, what their practice is like. So I always say, “Well, who’d like to start?” It takes a little courage to start, particularly if you’re in a situation such as this, where it may not be completely safe to say what you want to say.

Jordan says, “I’ll start.” And he gets this goofy grin on his face and starts laughing. Laughing and laughing and laughing and laughing. His whole body’s shaking, and the whole room starts laughing; everyone starts laughing. The whole room is laughing! Everybody’s cracking up. I haven’t the slightest idea what is going on or why we’re laughing. Nobody knows why we’re laughing. We’re just laughing. And I’ll tell you something – laughter is a precious thing in the Supermax in Boscobel. There are 18 people in a circle laughing their heads off – taking refuge in the Sangha.

That laughter, particularly coming from Jordan, was the biggest relief anyone could imagine, more than meditation or anything else. He trusted people enough and they trusted him, and we took refuge in the Sangha. It was something nobody could have imagined, but yet there it was. It’s the genius of the Sangha: something happens –something unexpected. After that, everything in that group changed.

We can have many Sanghas. Our Sangha can be our family. It can be our friends. It can be our spiritual path. It can be where we work. It can be your four cats and your two dogs. Whatever it is for you, you can take refuge in that Sangha. Taking refuge in the Sangha means you’re not alone. Sure there’s suffering, grief, isolation, pain, after all we’re locked in these individual bodies, in these minds. Yet we’re not alone. But don’t just take it because you hear it or read it. Take a good look and see what is happening and its meaning in your life. That’s taking refuge in the Sangha. 

SnowFlower Sangha invites you to the Annual Autumn Regional Retreat October 13-15, Bethel Horizons, Dodgeville, WI. A weekend of Mindfulness with Dharma Teacher Jack Lawlor, vegetarian food preparation by Rajan Pradhan. Registration information to follow.

\* Thay’s teachings on engaging our practice arise out of our radical inter-connection with all beings, with interbeing. So, yes, we don’t want to kill. But behind that is a deep and rich set of teachings. As we learn to embody them, these teachings can change our lives and help create peace in ourselves and in the world.

