

the Pure Land or in the Kingdom of God. When we are walking from one side of the room to the other or from one building to another, we can be aware of the contact of our feet with the earth and of our in and out breath. As we breathe in we can say "in," as we breathe out we can say "out" silently. We are aware that we are alive with each step, not carried away by our thoughts and emotions. We can train to practice walking meditation all day long. It is a wonderful practice which we can do anywhere and at any time; therefore, it has the capacity to transform our everyday life. (Recommended book: *The Long Road Turns to Joy*)

Practicing the Gathas

One way to help us dwell in the present moment is to practice reciting gathas or mindfulness verses. When we recite the gathas silently to our self, our mind comes back to the present moment and our thoughts are guided by the deep wisdom of our ancestors. Our actions of body, speech and mind are poetically filled with understanding and love. There are many gathas for different aspects of the practice. We can begin by memorizing one or two and learn more over time. (Recommended book: *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment*)

Hearing a Bell

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Listen, listen | (in breath) |
| This wonderful sound | (out breath) |
| Brings me back | (in breath) |
| to my true self. | (out breath) |

Joining Palms, Meeting Others

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|-----------------|--------------|
| A lotus for you | (in breath) |
| A Buddha to be. | (out breath) |

Walking Meditation

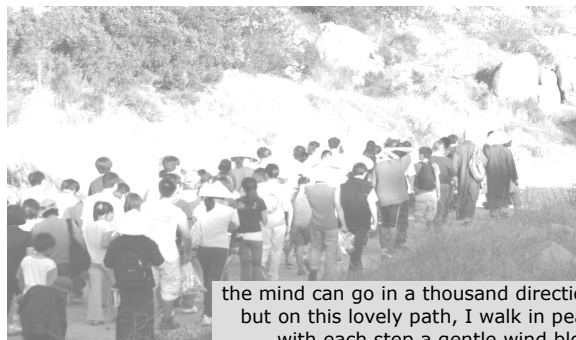
| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| I have arrived, I am home | (in breath, out breath) |
| In the here, in the now | (in breath, out breath) |
| I am solid, I am free | (in breath, out breath) |
| In the ultimate, I dwell. | (in breath, out breath) |

Eating Meditation

We are very fortunate to have food to eat and we are even more fortunate to have the opportunity to eat with a community of fellow practitioners. Eating in mindfulness can benefit our spiritual life and physical health. We allow our body and mind to be at ease while we eat. We do not rush to finish, but enjoy every morsel with awareness. We become aware of the rain, the sun and the green earth as we chew slowly. We are aware of what we are chewing and do not let our mind be occupied by meaningless thinking. We chew every mouthful at least thirty times so the saliva has a chance to aid the digestive process. Our full awareness during the meal is a way of showing gratitude for the nourishment and for the countless supporting conditions that have come to sustain us. We can look at each other from time to time with compassion and smile. We take time to enjoy our meal as a community, as a family. We wait for the whole community to be served before the bell is invited three times to start eating. The first 20 minutes we eat in silence. After a double sound of the bell we may converse or serve more food.

Sitting Meditation

The time of sitting meditation is not to achieve anything. Please do not try so hard. There must be enjoyment right in the very time of sitting. We are not sitting for some future happiness or enlightenment. Just sit to sit. Do not rush the ripening of your mind. We follow our conscious breathing and become aware of our body and mind, returning back to our breathing when we find our mind has strayed. Our sitting position needs to be upright, stable and at the same time relaxed. If your sitting position seems uncomfortable or incorrect, please ask for advice. If you experience discomfort in your sitting position, you can change it mindfully and quietly. After a short period of sitting meditation, there may be a session of walking meditation. You will be guided at that time on this practice. (Recommended book: *The Blooming of a Lotus*)



the mind can go in a thousand directions,
but on this lovely path, I walk in peace,
with each step a gentle wind blows,
with each step a flower blooms

Practicing as a Sangha

We have come to practice together as a community. We do not encourage isolated practices or solo retreats. We are part of a body - the Sangha body, the community. Our practice is that of Interbeing. Our joy and our sorrow contribute to the collective joy and sorrow of the community. Our transformation and realization on the path can nourish us all. The community can also be of great support if our heart is open. Our insight and development must be realized in the community. There is no individual, separated happiness.

Observing Noble Silence

A period of deep silence is observed, normally from 9:30pm until after breakfast the next morning. This is very healing. We allow the silence, the calmness and the energy of the Sangha to penetrate our being. We return to our tents or dormitory slowly, aware of every step. We breathe deeply and enjoy the stillness. We refrain from talking unnecessarily. This is a very deep practice that can bring us a lot of nourishment. We may like to go to bed right away. Lying on our back, we can practice Deep Relaxation. In the morning, we move mindfully and silently, taking time to breathe, to use the bathroom and then to proceed immediately to the meditation hall.

When we see someone along the path, we can join our palms and bow, allowing him or her to enjoy the morning the way we do. The best time for talking is during a Dharma discussion, where the sharing is conducted with much respect and trust. We learn to speak and listen deeply. The rest of the day we really do not need to talk very much.

Listening to Dharma Talks

The expounded teachings can be like a Dharma rain watering the seeds of our store consciousness. If our conscious mind is trying too hard to remember, to compare and to understand something, it becomes like the hardened earth; thus the Dharma rain can not reach the depths of our mind easily. So let go and enjoy the rain. If we relax and enjoy listening during the talk, our concentration will arise naturally. We will be alert and attentive. Please arrive on time for the talks. Enjoy your breathing before the talk begins and during the talk. Out of respect for the teachings and the teacher, you are asked to sit on a cushion or in a chair at the back during the teachings and not to lie down. (Recommended Books: *The Miracle of Mindfulness; Peace is Every Step; Being Peace; The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching; Old Path White Cloud; My Master's Robe, Transformation at the Base*)

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR BEING TOGETHER

The **Five Mindfulness Trainings** represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.

Everyone who comes to practice is requested to observe the **Five Mindfulness Trainings**. No smoking, no drinking and no sexual practice are allowed on the grounds of the monastery. Please respect the community's effort in this observance.

Reverence For Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to

transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming.



True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of

anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriment, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

The practice of the trainings is also the practice of the Three Refuges, because it is a concrete expression of one's appreciation and trust in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. That is why the trainings always go together with the Three Refuges. The equivalent of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and the Three Refuges can also be found in great spiritual traditions of the world. No matter what one's spiritual tradition, the practice of the Trainings and the Three Refuges helps one to be rooted more deeply in one's own tradition. If you are interested in receiving the Five Mindfulness Trainings, please contact the monastery. (Recommended book: *For a Future to Be Possible*)



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practicing

at deer park monastery

“I have arrived. I am home”

These two lines are the essence of the practice of the Plum Village tradition taught by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. It is the practice of dwelling happily in the present moment. We are no longer grasping at the future, regretting the past or being swept by our feelings of despair and anger. We have arrived at our true home, our true self, no longer seeking to be something else.

Breathing Consciously

To breathe in consciously is to know that the air is entering our body, and to breathe out consciously is to know that our body is exchanging air. Thus, we are in contact with the air and with our body and, because our mind is being attentive to all this, we are in contact with our mind, too; just as it is. We only need one conscious breath to be back in contact with our inner self and with the wonders that surround us. Breathing consciously with mere attention can be very nourishing and healing. (Recommended book: *Breathe! You are Alive; Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*)

Stopping for the Wonderful Sounds

The sound of the temple bells, the telephone and the clock chimes are all wonderful sounds to help us to practice. When we hear them, we can stop what we are doing and, at the same time, we can stop talking and even stop thinking. We just stop and become aware of the present moment by following our breathing. Enjoying three in-breaths and three out-breaths is the best way to listen to these wonderful sounds.

Walking Meditation

Whenever we are not standing, sitting or lying down, we are moving. We can learn to move and to walk with awareness. We do not need to rush. We have arrived with each step in the present moment; we can step in

