

# Mindful News



Newsletter of the Mindfulness Community of Puget Sound

Spring 2002

## Making Friends with Thoughts

*By Eileen Kiera*

Usually when we sit in meditation we notice thoughts running through our minds. It's important to be present enough to pay attention to these thoughts, and in order to do that we must know how to stop. We stop when we listen to the bell at the beginning and end of a period of sitting. We stop when we come back to our awareness of breath, our bodies, our hearing. We can practice stopping many times during the day by taking a conscious breath, and by relaxing into our bodies. Often people think that in order to be present, we must push away, or cut off our thoughts. But when we practice stopping, and coming back to the present moment, then we can welcome our thoughts without getting caught in them.

Thoughts are a large part of what makes up our identity. They arise out of the nature of being human. Our mind naturally produces thoughts. And by paying attention to our thoughts, we can learn about ourselves. Thoughts arise from our karma, and our karma comes from our conditioning (the way we were raised), our genes (our physical inheritance), and our culture (the collective consciousness.) Our karma is what makes us the wonderful unique person we are. But if we identify with our thoughts, we limit what we can realize about our lives as individuals and our lives in relationship to the whole of existence. In meditation, many of our thoughts are repeated over and over again. Thoughts that keep coming up point to the places where we get caught in our identity, caught in making a separate self. This is a

place where it is most important to be aware. Thoughts that keep reasserting themselves in our consciousness are generally connected with suffering. They arise from our karma, and hold us in suffering patterns because we identify them as reality. They prevent us from realizing a larger reality.

After stopping, and welcoming thoughts, we are able to open to them, and create space around them. Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that we ask ourselves "Am I sure?" whenever we believe our thoughts to be the only reality. I always ask a question to definitive thoughts. Sometimes I say "What can I learn from you, my thoughts?" or "How can I understand?" When I'm able to stay

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*Collage created at a Monday night program.*



## *Mindful News*

Mindful News is the voice of the Mindfulness Community of Puget Sound, a Sangha that practices Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. It is published three times a year. May it be for the benefit of all beings.

Teacher: Eileen Kiera  
Practice Elder: Sue Perkins  
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Retreats: Anita Graham  
Orientation: Sue Perkins  
Newsletter Editors: Ellie Graham, Erie Jones, Teresa Lutterman  
Volunteer Coordinator: Erie Jones  
Monday Night Program: Duncan Berry  
Days of Mindfulness: D.J. Lower  
Wednesday night sit & TTS liaison: Ellie Graham  
Center Coordinating Committee: David Tower & Erie Jones

If you have any questions or want further information, please call us at 206-324-5373 or visit our website at [www.mindfulnesspugetsound.org](http://www.mindfulnesspugetsound.org)

Our weekly program, which usually includes two periods of sitting, walking, and a Dharma talk or community dialogue, is every Monday from 6:30 to 8:30 PM at our center at 1910 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. We have a Day of Mindfulness on the third Sunday of every month from 10 AM to 5 PM. All are welcome.

We welcome contributions to the newsletter. Please email ideas to [lutterman@earthlink.net](mailto:lutterman@earthlink.net)  
Deadlines for the upcoming issues are:

Fall issue: September 9th  
Winter issue: December 2<sup>nd</sup>

## Before Brush Touches

*by Erie Jones*

With thanks to Thay

Visiting...

A monk asked  
Can I see a picture, an image  
Serene and smiling  
Like one I saw as a girl  
Magazine line drawing  
Chinese Buddha

Can you show me your  
American Bodhisattva  
Many faces reflected  
Sitting, perhaps  
On daisies, maize, and cedar  
Instead of lotus

Where do we look  
Job, Jesus of Nazereth, St. Francis  
West African woman comforting children in the hold  
Tubman, Lincoln, Sealth  
Whitman, Chief Joseph the Younger, Sacagawea  
Ginsberg, Ellington,  
Anne Frank, Evers, Chavez  
Parks, King Jr.  
Your Grandmother  
My neighbor  
Our selves

If Henry Moore sculpted, or Georgia O'Keefe painted  
American Bodhisattva  
What is her face  
Before she was born  
In oil and stone

## Monday Nights at the Sangha

by *Erie Jones*

In the past couple of months of Monday night gatherings, we have been focusing on The Four Brahmaviharas - maitri, karuna, mudita, and upeksha. In English, these somewhat translate to Love, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity (or Peace).

Also called The Four Immeasurable Minds, they have another very poetic name - The Four Abodes of the Heart. As Thay says, they are “the very nature of an enlightened person”. When we practice them deeply, or perhaps it is better to say, when we dwell in them, and they in us, deeply, we are in touch with the Bodhisattvas within us all. Our teacher, Eileen Kiera, has given a series of wonderful Dharma talks on this topic.

Along with this, another focus of Monday nights has been to strengthen and deepen fundamental practices, particularly chanting and sutra services. The feeling of the Monday night committee is that it's important to always have a sutra and chanting service, even if brief. Eileen gave a lovely Dharma talk on chanting, and more specifically, toning, as a practice with many benefits. We have been incorporating this more consistently. Also, regardless of how full the evening may be, a set of fundamental Sutras are nearly always recited/ chanted. There's a basic group we should always practice, and then on certain Mondays, extend the sutra practice to include longer practices, such as Touching the Earth, and other practices. The repetition of these rituals/practices can only deepen our understanding as time goes on.

Combined with Eileen's teachings, and regular listening to Thay via tape, we can also avail ourselves to special activities, such as discussions, art practices, and others.



*Ellie Graham making a collage at one of our Monday night sessions.*

## Fall Retreat

The Fall Retreat dates are November 1 – 8. A registration form will be in the next newsletter. Contact Anita Graham at 206-431-8303 for further information.

## Garden Days

You may have noticed how beautiful our grounds are looking this spring. This is thanks to the volunteers who participate in the Garden Days. If you are interested in helping, note the upcoming dates. The time is 11:00 to 4:00. Please call Kay Peters at 206-322-2447 to confirm.

May 11  
June 1  
July 6  
August 3  
September 7

*The following writings are reflections on the four Abodes of the Heart—Compassion, Equanimity, Joy and Love. The four Abodes, or Brahmaviharas, were the theme of the Spring Monday night program.*



## Thoughts on Joy

*compiled by Teresa Lutterman*

“The practice of mindful living should be joyful and pleasant. ...Examine your practice. See what brings you joy and happiness of a sustained kind. Try to spend time with a Sangha, brothers and sisters who are creating a field of mindful energy that can make your practice easy. Work together with a teacher and with a friend to transform your suffering into compassion, peace and understanding, and do it with joy and ease.”

*From “The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching” by Thich Nhat Hanh, pg. 95*

“We tend to misunderstand the link between joy and gratefulness. We notice that joyful people are grateful and suppose they are grateful for their joy. But the reverse is true: Their joy springs from gratefulness.”

*From “Legacy of the Heart—The Spiritual Advantages of a Painful Childhood” by Wayne Muller pg.129. He is quoting Brother David Steindl-Rast, “Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer.”*



## An Invitation to Self-Compassion

*by Nan Macy*

“Pay attention to that which matters,” I hear a voice inside of me saying. “Drop down inside and listen to your heart—let it sing, let it cry, let it dance, let it mourn. Be a witness to your own truth. Face fear with the same openness as you face joy. Be honest with yourself as you travel the topography of your inner world. Don’t be afraid to let go of that which no longer serves you. And most of all, be gentle and kind. Hold your own hand as you would hold that of a child.”

Though my hand penned these words in my journal just over a year ago—just two days before my Dad died—they are not my words. I’ve come to believe that they came to me through my Dad’s spirit as it prepared to leave this life, even though the person who was my Dad never would have spoken them. At their core is Compassion, particularly self-compassion.

New to the study and practice of Mindfulness, I’m learning that Compassion is about being with tenderness and being willing to touch and hold pain. It’s about accepting these as an invitation into the ever-expanding heart that’s in each of us. This, like oxygen, is necessary for survival. And sometimes if we don’t go there willingly, life gets our attention through increasingly painful circumstances—like the death of someone we love.

A challenging lesson in all of this for me, a self-proclaimed “doer,” is to use my “doing energy” to create opportunities to just be—to let go. To do so is an act of self-compassion. I’m grateful to my Dad’s spirit for showing me a way into this stillness.

## Equanimity

*by Ellie Graham*



I had just completed a written narrative of the events that resulted in my thirty foot fall from a ski chair lift two months ago. In two hours, we had an appointment with a lawyer to discuss safety and liability issues surrounding the injury. I didn't look forward to the meeting. I didn't want to return to the injury events yet another time. My mind had already done so many replays, usually in the middle of the night.

Then, the sobs started. You know the kind. They suddenly start and shake you like an earthquake. They roll and flow through your body and can't be stopped. It seems that all of the pain just needs to find a way out. My husband came, put his arms around me, held me, while I sobbed. Slowly, the emotional waves subsided. I felt drained but was calmed by his loving concern, his presence.

Equanimity, peace, seems so far away at times like this. Love, joy and compassion, the other "abodes of the heart" are abundant in my life...easy to touch and foster. But, how do we generate that distance, that ability to see the big picture, all aspects of an issue? A soaring eagle is my visual image of equanimity. How to get there? (My fall is proof enough that I haven't mastered flying!) How do we keep ourselves from being caught in the daily worries, the guilt, the, "should haves"?

But, I do have faith, a deep belief that keeps me on this path, that persistence in practice will get me closer to the peace I desire. So, I keep on sitting, coming back to my breath, trying to stay here, "now".

## On Love

*by Jamie Hascall*

Thinking of love these days is difficult. I'm trying to pull a semblance of normalcy from the ashes of a relationship first damaged by my own thoughtless words, then destroyed by feelings we could not heal. I sought out the sangha to attempt to develop the mindfulness and spiritual home I need. Neither is yet mine but the support I've found here provides great comfort.

In the midst of my pain and questioning, I've been very aware of the ways love is present in my life, beginning with the joy and sharing with my former partner. As painful as the present is, I have enormous gratitude for the presence she had in my life.

I have recently had the wondrous experience of celebrating my maternal Grandmother's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Though she seemed a mere shell, on parting her face lit up with a huge smile as she said how wonderful it had been to see us. The love deep inside joined us through the dementia that has robbed her of memory.

My friend and co-worker Michael died in an accident while running a work errand for me. In the intervening years I have become close friends with his widow Kathryn and the love and support that have passed between us has given us each strength to heal and move on with our lives. I recently had the joy of watching her rebirth through baptism into a spiritual community she loves.

Without the love of family, friends, the sangha, and the other spiritual communities, I know not where my life would lead. But with this great and unasked for love, I know I will find the home I need and be able to let my own love heal others as they are doing for me.

# Spring Retreat

By Ellie Graham

## Spring Retreat Hosts 'Council of All Beings'

*Listen, humans, this is our world. For hundreds of millions of years we have been evolving our ways, rich in our own wisdom. Now our days are coming to a close because of what you are doing. It is time for you to hear us.*

The colorful masked beings, both youth and adult, sat in a circle in the light filled room opening to the beautiful beach and wetlands of Camp Indianola. They included wild cats, bear, goat, whale, African elephant, rabbit, deer, crow, insects, salt marshes, grasses, the forest, sun and sky.

One at a time, each spokesperson for a life form told their story. With both humor and sorrow, they spoke of how humans had impacted their lives and detailed our inter-being on this planet. Rabbit said, "Stop making me into a cartoon character!" Goat urged humans to learn from her, kick up their heels and dance with the joy of living. Salt marsh asked humans to remember, and not destroy, the "in-between places" that nurture and foster new life. Whale lamented the death of brothers and sisters when the U.S. Navy tested new sonar equipment in the South Pacific without considering the impact of these loud underwater noises on the many beings in the sea.

After each being made their plea, the council chanted, "We hear you!" As the ceremony evolved, the beings in the Council sought to find ways to strengthen humans, to share their powers of diversity, patience, courage and perseverance with humans. In speaking of this ritual, which she has promoted, Joanna Macy says:

These powers are available to us all because they inhere in the web of life and Because, in the final analysis, that web is what we are. By virtue of the long planetary journey we have made, and the processes still at work within us, that deep ecology is our true nature. We can draw upon it now in this time of danger.

(*World as Lover, World as Self*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1991, p.205)



*A Being relaxing at the Spring retreat.*



## Family Party and Tofu Grill

Saturday June 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 PM there will be a party at the Practice Center. Please bring your families, a potluck item or something to grill, favorite games and musical instruments. Note this is a Garden Day and all are welcome at both events.

## Mountain Lamp Community

Many of you know our teacher Eileen Kiera has her home at Wild Rose Farm in Deming, Washington. That is the location of the rural practice center known as Mountain Lamp. Eileen has an extensive teaching and retreat schedule, guiding several sanghas throughout the Northwest.

Here are some upcoming events at Mountain Lamp:

Spring Retreat	May 10 – 12
Summer Retreat	July 31 – August 4
Fall Harvest Retreat	September 21 – 22
Days of Mindfulness	June 1, September 7, and December 7
First Saturday Practice	10:00 to 5:00.

Please contact Jim Needles at [jwninc@earthlink.net](mailto:jwninc@earthlink.net) or call 360-592-0600 for further information.

## Camp Indianola Future Uncertain

*by Ellie Graham*

Spring and fall MCPS retreats at Camp Indianola have been a tradition that may need to find a new home. Seattle First United Methodist Church has put the Camp up for sale in order to raise \$8 million in earthquake repairs for their downtown Seattle Church. The Pacific NW Conference which manages the Camp is attempting to buy the property and must raise \$2.2 million by July 1, 2002. The beautiful property has 1000 feet of waterfront, old growth forest and a salt marsh teeming with waterfowl. It has been a special place of spiritual connection for thousands of campers and retreatants. If you would like to help with fundraising or want more information, contact Tony Wilson at 800-488-4179 or send a donation toward purchase of Camp Indianola to Pacific Northwest Conference, United Methodist Church, 2112 Third Ave, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98121

### **Mindfulness Community of Puget Sound Membership & Subscription Form**

Yes, I would like to participate in the Mindfulness Community of Puget Sound as a:  
 Regular Member: \$25/month (or whatever you can) to support practice center and activities.

(note—Regular Members pay reduced fees for retreats.)

Associate Members: \$10/year to defray cost of newsletter.

Supporting Member: Donation basis. Members who cannot attend regularly but would like to receive newsletter and support the Sangha financially.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Return to MCPS, 1910 24<sup>th</sup> Ave. S, Seattle, WA 98144

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present and open in the midst of thoughts, then understanding arises, and I feel at peace. When thoughts overpower our ability to stay present in the midst of them, and we find ourselves getting lost in them, over and over again, it's then important to take refuge in our awareness of the world. Walking meditation is a wonderful practice to settle ourselves, while taking refuge in the warm sun, the cool breezes, the smells of arriving spring. We arrive anew in each moment. When we're stable, then we can begin to open to the thoughts again.

Ultimately, thoughts become our friend. They allow us to see through our individual self to the self that has no separate existence from the life of the universe. They show us the way to be free. They always told me that it is important to practice intelligently. In meditation, we can rest with our thinking mind as our friend, and not try to abolish or destroy it. Rather, we can move through the identity created by our thoughts into a greater understanding of our place in the universe.

## Board Changes

Many thanks to outgoing Board Members Sammie Fick and David Tower for their generous service to the sangha. We welcome new Board Member Naoto Kosugi with appreciation for his willingness to serve.

## Practice Center Update

Expanded remodeling plans to include a bedroom at the practice center have been under review. The boards approved moving forward with the new plan pending funding. More information will be forthcoming in future newsletters.

## MCPS Web Site

We now have a beautiful new web site thanks to the efforts of Karen Rosenstiel of Three Treasures Sangha. The address is [www.mindfulnesspugetsound.org](http://www.mindfulnesspugetsound.org)



## *MINDFUL NEWS*

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