

along the Path

WINTER 2012

The Newsletter of the Mindfulness Practice Center of Fairfax

THE PRACTICE OF TRUE LOVE

by Anh-Huong Nguyen

Since I was young, I have often pondered why people who love each other so much may suffer greatly. The Vietnamese word “nha thuong” means hospital. “Nha” means house or home. “Thuong” is love. House of Love. Love can heal wounds and cure illnesses. Love is organic. It can also turn into resentment, anger, and separation.

When two people are in love, they try to overcome all obstacles in order to live together. After 5 or 10 years, suffering can fill their hearts and divorce may result. How can we love in a way that continues to bring happiness into our lives? The word “love” seems to have lost its original meaning. We love ice cream, a movie, a dress, or a person. We sometimes believe the object of our love can fulfill our needs and satisfy our desires.

In light of Buddhist teaching, love is made of understanding. Without understanding, love eventually leads to suffering. To love is to be present. How can we truly love if we are not there for the one we love?

Mindfulness helps us to be there, look deeply into ourselves and others in order to understand. It allows us to look with fresh eyes and listen

with new ears. If we are too sure of our perceptions, communication is cut and suffering perpetuates. Practicing the mantra “Are you sure?” can help to open the doors of our heart again.

Have you been able to understand the joy and aspirations, fear and hope, in yourself and in your beloved?

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Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness is the intention and capacity to bring happiness to those we love. That capacity can be developed through the practice of looking and listening deeply. We have to understand the real situations of our loved ones and how we might be contributing to their unhappiness. If you truly love her, refrain from watering seeds of suffering. Instead, nourish her seeds of happiness each day. Both of you will be happy.

The mantra “Darling, I am here for you” will remind you to breathe calmly to share your true presence. You may also use this mantra,

“Darling, I know you are still there and it makes me so happy.” Your beloved will be happy to know that you are present and her presence is precious to you.

These mantras are fruits of deep looking. When a mantra is pronounced with utter concentration, it immediately transforms the situation in our hearts. A look, word or action arising from deep understanding is an act of true love.



Photo by Jenny Roca

Compassion

Compassion is the intention and ability to relieve pain in those we love. If we have never starved, it is difficult to have compassion for those who do not have food. I began sending packages to help poor families in Vietnam during my freshman year in college – 9 months after I arrived in the US.

After reading the stories of these families, I chose not to eat dinner once a week. On those nights, the children’s hunger became so alive in me. This led to the manifestation of the Committee for the Relief of Poor Children in Vietnam – a non-profit organization which provides hot lunches and schooling to poor Vietnamese children. When the fire of compassion starts burning inside, we will do whatever we can to help ease the suffering of others.

Being estranged to our own pain, we can become a stranger to our beloved. How can we help her?

When each partner suffers alone, they live under the same roof but not in the same reality. They no longer are able to listen to each other.

We need to be embraced with tenderness so that understanding and compassion may arise. Next

time, when you notice that your beloved is in pain, breathe in and out mindfully in order to be there. You may practice this mantra, “Darling, I know you suffer and I am here for you.” Your beloved will be able to relax and feel relief.

If you believe that her unhappiness has to do with what you’ve said or done earlier, then you may say, “Darling, I am sorry if I made you suffer out of ignorance. Please help me to understand you better because I love you and want you to be happy.” In your calm and loving presence, your beloved’s heart will open again.

Breathe calmly to maintain compassion as your beloved begins to speak. In deep listening, your goal is for the other to suffer less. Continue to sit and listen without interrupting, even when the words are full of bitterness and wrong perceptions. Later, an opportunity may arise to adjust the other’s perceptions. This is the practice of compassionate listening – the practice of true love.

Joy

The third aspect of true love is joy. Joy comes with a sense of peace and contentment which perpetuates into the future. Excitement does not

have the same calming effect; it fades away quickly and may lead to unhappiness.

True love always brings joy to ourselves and to those we love. True joy does not discriminate between self and others. How can we feel joy for another person when we do not feel joy for ourselves?

One late summer afternoon when Bao-Tich was seven, he came into the kitchen as I was fixing dinner. He desperately wanted me to play basketball with him. Without thinking, I said, "Yes." The thought that I had never played basketball before did not cross my mind. I stopped chopping vegetables, turned off the stove and walked with him to a neighbor's who had a basketball hoop. It was one of the most memorable afternoons of our lives. Bao-Tich was radiant and happy like a fish in water. We were immersing ourselves deeply into the game. The ball became a wonder in my hands. The earth and sky were rejoicing.

My decision to stop everything and just go play with Bao-Tich was not made by mind-consciousness and intellectual reasoning. I was completely there with him the moment he came into the kitchen and made his request. The path was open before us. Bao-Tich and I walked that path to the basketball hoop. That was it! Mom did not have to sacrifice herself in order to play basketball with Bao-Tich. He did not feel guilty that his mother had to stop fixing dinner. There were no terms and conditions. No fear, worry, or expectations. There was just pure joy, lightness and freedom.

Equanimity

The fourth aspect of true love is equanimity, non-attachment, non-discrimination, letting go. In true love, one partner's joy or pain is inseparable from that of the other. Without having enough space around, a flower cannot bloom and exude its beauty. Attachment,

clinging, and discrimination create a lack of space inside and can bring suffering. With deep looking, we gradually free ourselves from superiority as well as inferiority complexes.

Life is impermanent. It is in the nature of ourselves and our loved ones to change. Having new insights into our suffering enables us to let go of certain old beliefs and misperceptions so that our relationship can begin anew. Otherwise, our love for each other can be a prison.

Have you ever brought to your mind the image of yourself as an innocent and vulnerable four-year-old, and your beloved as a four-year-old? The block of pain in your heart will be permeated with the energy of compassion for this four-year-old in you and in her. This will help both of you to look at and listen to each other in a new way.

These four elements of true love are also called The Four Immeasurable Minds. They are "immeasurable," because if we practice them, happiness can grow in us every day. And everyone around us will also become happier.



Photo by Jenny Roca

THE IMPERMANENCE OF TRUE LOVE

by Garrett Phelan

On November 15th my wife, Jane, and I celebrated our 43rd wedding anniversary. On the evening of that day, the MPCF Thursday night sitting had a Dharma discussion on the Third Mindfulness Training: True Love. Jane was thousands of miles away in South Korea on a grant sharing arts integration in children's education. Alone, I found myself reflecting on our marriage, on the Third Mindfulness Training, and my practice.

One sentence in the Fourth of the The Five Remembrances, by Thich Nhat Hanh, came up for me: "All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change."

I am not the same person that my wife fell in love with more than 43 years ago, and she is not the same person I fell in love with. We have both changed. If we have changed, our love must have changed. I came to realize that if I am still in love after 45 years, that love is more expansive, stronger, and more generous. Or else, we would be locked in the past with our old needs and habitual suffering.

When I look back at those two young people falling in love and getting married, I see two incomplete people who carried with them the suffering of their families and their ancestors. There was a strong need to soothe the suffering and fill the needs that our families couldn't fill for us. We sought out each other to see those needs filled with love. I craved for someone to fulfill those needs in me, to fill a hole in my soul.

"All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change."

We both came from families that struggled with pain and anger, secrets, unspoken troubles -- even though on the surface, the suffering looked different and arose from different sources. At the same time as we were seeking a kindred spirit who could fill in the gaps, we weren't aware that we were two wounded souls looking for some way to break the pattern of that suffering. We must have realized, on some level, to some degree. But neither of us knew how to be the catalyst for transformation.

Watching children grow, change and develop over a lifetime, parents are able to accept those changes and love their sons and daughters even more deeply and unconditionally. Yet for many of us, it is difficult to accept, appreciate, and support growth and change in our loved ones.



Photo by Lewis Folden

Accepting change and impermanence is for me a really crucial element in true love. It began with letting go of my own needs -- insecurities that needed to be satisfied -- by imposing those needs on my beloved. A love based on need is a love locked in chains.

I experienced early on that Jane was not going to stand still. She sought to grow and change, to find her strengths and become whole. As frightening as that was for me, I realized my fear of change, my need to keep each of us the same – to hold us back in the past -- would destroy our marriage. I would always be trapped in my needs and I would try to trap Jane into soothing those needs and also trying to preserve her need for me. It was a road map to continued suffering and a danger to a healthy, truly loving relationship.



Photo by Lewis Folden

I have deep gratitude that, although we wallowed in the swamp of those insecurities for many years, we managed to struggle through the complex mix of needs, suffering and what we then understood and accepted as love.

In many ways Jane challenged me to look deeply at my own fears because of the changes she was experiencing in herself. I also came to appreciate that changes and growth didn't always come for each of us at the same time. I had to let go. I had to learn to love without fear. Fear of change. Little by little, I learned to appreciate and support Jane's changes that were making her more determined to be healthy and strong.

Fifteen years ago, we were fortunate to find Thay and to begin the practice of mindfulness meditation. Even though our love had depth and

strength, we were still consumed by our own needs, each of us condemned to our own private sufferings -- that we did not understand were really one. The "I and you" separateness was not allowing us to listen deeply with hearts open to unconditional love. Although Jane suffered when I was suffering, as I did when she struggled, we

would retreat into our separate sufferings. Isolated from each other, our egos would armor our hearts, leaving them closed to healing.

Little by little, our commitment to the mindfulness practice

opened the door to our healing as one.

Mindfulness freed us, through the nourishment of the sangha -- a safe space where we could truly let go of our fears, where we could learn to love and to reconcile with gratitude each other's differences. Through patience and a commitment to deepen our love, the practice allowed us to free ourselves from the habit formations of the past, to let go and to ease the suffering of our families and ancestors. Sitting, walking, attending days of mindfulness and retreats, gave us the quiet time and space to be together without being plagued by the past. As we grow to understand the interbeing nature of true love, we also feel a growing commitment to contributing to the greater happiness of others. "Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future."

THE LAST DAY OF SUMMER

by Robert Ertman

*fleas, lice,
a horse pissing
by my pillow*
--Matsuo Basho

Out on the streets the way Bernie Glassman teaches "street retreats"-- unwashed and without money — we spend the day walking around, not staying any place too long. We find a church soup kitchen, panhandle, and look for water and other necessities that we had always taken for granted.

restrooms—
for customers
only

Someone puts us on to a garden behind a downtown church. As discreetly as we can, we gather cardboard from the alleys. It takes a lot of cardboard to sleep six and it would have taken a lot more to sleep six comfortably.

no horse pissing
near my pillow—
no pillow

Towards morning my daughter discovers that her cardboard is covered with slugs and she takes refuge with her mom in a dryer spot. There are slugs on my cardboard too, but I just try not to roll over. Before dawn, as cars arrive for the first service, we slip away.

looking for a place to pee—
marking the autumnal equinox

RETIREMENT: LAST DAYS

by Joyce Bailey

Several years ago, Anh-Huong was talking about time: Time to Practice -- about making Time to Practice. Life is short and she invited us to reflect on what we were doing with our time. Soon after that, several Sangha friends and I found ourselves talking about how we spend our time both at work and at home. As we are of a certain age, the conversation turned to retirement: when, how, what it would be like. At times, the idea of retirement sounded like heaven itself, endless days stretching out as far as the eye could see, no pressures, no worry, no stress. Other times it seemed pretty daunting – the financial challenge, leaving familiar roles in the workplace, trying to figure out what would we do instead of getting up and going to work each day. We decided to get together periodically with another Sangha friend who had recently retired, to discuss and reflect together. It is wonderful to have friends in the practice to discuss major life events with, and to sit and breathe together with these thoughts and feelings. In the past, I would usually approach major events with a combination of excitement, anxiety, and confusion, and stumble through the best I could. With my Sangha friends, I find I have the space and support to look more deeply at what is going on within and around me, and to learn from what they share. No one has the “right” answer; no one has the magic formula, but we go forward together and this brings calmness to the process and a depth and curiosity to this stage of life.

Since we first began getting together to talk about retirement, two group members actually retired. One person who thought he was going to retire had to postpone it; I decided to retire from teaching at the end of this school year, June 2013. Knowing that this is the last year, it is easier for me to step back from the everyday stresses of teaching -- preparing lessons, grading papers, reaching out to students who are falling behind, dealing with parents -- and it is easier to

look at the big picture. As my worries and anxieties loosen a bit, I find myself more relaxed in the classroom, taking more time to be with the students and staff, and pausing to smile to life. I was acutely aware that August 27th was my last "First Day of School" and August 30th was my last "Back to School Night." Recently, I led my last wetland biodiversity study and gave the Chapter 2 Test for the last time. Aware of this series of "last times," I am more present and I enjoy each day more fully, even when things are not going smoothly. I can see more clearly the underlying assumption I carry with me, the assumption that things will continue the way they are now, even though we all know they will not. That tendency to take things for granted. Now I am inviting myself to look at other activities outside of work and ask myself, "Can I approach each day with this sense of immediacy and awareness?" Each day, each hour, each minute is also a last day, a last hour, a last minute. It does not come again. When I let my mind wander, when I get caught up in endless stories and dramas, I miss a precious day, an hour, a minute, and it does not come back again. I hope this year will help me learn to live each moment in awareness, in gratitude. I know my Sangha friends are here to support me, my teachers are here to guide me, and the Dharma shows me the path. Being present, in this moment, is a great gift.

THAT'S ME

by William Menza

Whenever, wherever, however
You meet someone,
Look at them directly,
And immediately say to yourself: "That's me."
And act accordingly.
You might also even say: "I'm him or her."
And respond from that place.
Remember: "That's me. "I'm him or her."
And the paradigm shifts
Towards the eternal truth.

THE POWER OF A RETREAT

by Maryanne Nobile

I attended the October 2012 Retreat expecting to have a good time. Saw an old friend in the parking lot; now, I'd really have a great time, I thought.

Soon my mood shifted and by the time I gave my personal weather forecast, my report was posted as cloudy. I was ready to go home, and the retreat had barely begun. Sometimes we place unrealistic expectations upon a situation. I came to realize that all I really wanted to do at this retreat was to have fun.

I did not feel like contemplating my ancestral seeds or how by watering them, I watered my own suffering. I listened as others told of their own or someone else's suffering. They were consumed by their suffering as I was by mine.

Our friends and teachers, Anh-Huong and Thu, stressed that only by remaining relaxed can one begin to soften and recovery will then manifest. I had learned early on that the way to survive this ordeal was to develop a chip on my shoulders; how the heck would I now stay calm?

Brother Bill, in his very mirthful way, gave a dharma talk the last day. He told many different parables; a few really struck home. A point was made that none of us would be there if it weren't for our suffering.

So I came away from the retreat with some homework: how to laugh at myself when difficulties arose. Easier said than done.

A week after the retreat, my husband and I took a walk. About 50 yards ahead of us, a thin but strong tree came crashing down and entirely blocked our path. I noted it as a sign made even clearer that together, the two of us were on the wrong path. The work from the retreat had begun.

YOGA, THE BREATH, AND MINDFULNESS

by Charlie Heffernan



Photo by Jenny Roca

Offering yoga classes gives me the opportunity to regularly connect the group that assembles on the mat with the miracle of breathing. With a focus on anatomy, my classes include very specific descriptions of what happens in the body with in-breaths and out-breaths. Which bones, muscles and ligaments move in order to facilitate respiration: how to make the in-breath deeper, the out-breath longer, etc. Often we practice alternate-nostril breathing, or other *pranayama* (yogic breathing) techniques.

Then it becomes important to scale back on all the specificity and move into simple stillness. The very first principle about yoga, given in the sutras of the sage Patanjali, states that 'yoga stills the fluctuations of the mind.' So, I suggest that we begin to let go of the manipulation of the breath and the body and move into just being still, letting the breath come and go.

That is when Thay's teachings and gathas work perfectly. At the end of stretching and pranayama, when we are in *savasana* (Corpse Pose), I offer that the present moment is the only moment we really have, and say:

breathing in, simply be aware of breathing in,
breathing out, simply be aware of breathing out
In, out

The in-breath is deep,
the out-breath is slow
Deep, slow

Breathing in, feel calm,
breathing out, feel at ease
Calm, ease

Breathing in ... smile,
breathing out ...release
Smile, release

Invariably, as we make our way out of *savasana* to end the class, there are wonderful smiles, the smiles of the Buddha, on all our faces.

PILGRIMS

by William Menza

We are pilgrims,
On a pilgrimage,
Learning anew,
About ancient people and places.
A great adventure
Into new experiences.
This is the way
From birth to death.
This is the Way.
Om Mani Padme Hum.



Photo by Lewis Folden

DOES MY DOG HAVE BUDDHA NATURE?

by **Emily Whittle**

I didn't want a dog.

In fact, although I adore my cat, Isis, I had decided she would be my last pet. I dreamed someday of extended guiltless visits to Plum Village or Blue Cliff Monastery.

Then, in July, we moved and my parent's dog, Alfie, moved with us.

That's not the way it was supposed to be.

Two years before, on a dark and stormy night, my sister had found him, abandoned, in the middle of a busy highway. Without thinking of consequences, she rescued him from certain death. My parents, who had recently been burglarized, decided to adopt him because he proved to be an excellent watchdog. Within a short time, my mother's dementia and my father's failing health forced me into the role of his primary caretaker. At that time, I lived only a few minutes away.

When we first planned our move, my parents had agreed to rent the house directly behind our new house, which would solve the problem of the dog. One week before The Big Move, my father balked. He wasn't going—not now, not ever. With our belongings already packed and the moving truck under contract, we reluctantly moved without them. The only workable solution was to take Alfie with us.

In the first months, Alfie's medical bills mounted astronomically and his separation anxiety escalated. I was no longer free to come and go without careful planning. We began to understand why Alfie had been abandoned in the first place.

The turning point in my attitude came at the end of a long stressful day dealing with yet another medical crisis with my parents. I came home to a sick dog needing immediate veterinary care. In my frustration, I stomped my feet like a two-year old and howled, "I don't want this dog!" In a flash, as the words flew from my mouth, I remembered my mother, long ago, at the end of her rope with me, yelling, "I don't want this child!"

The memory stopped me in my tracks. So, this is how she felt—overwhelmed, tired, and unequipped for the challenge. Suddenly, a wave of compassion and understanding engulfed me, over-riding my feeling of being unloved and unwanted. My anger evaporated. I turned to Alfie with renewed curiosity and vowed to learn and grow from our relationship.

At the veterinarian's office, I made other connections to my childhood. Alfie's breed is prone to severe skin and food allergies, as well as stomach problems from an inability to process fats. As a child, I, too, suffered from debilitating eczema, and a mysterious stomach ailment that was never successfully diagnosed, but was probably anxiety induced. I saw that Alfie was a canine version of my young self and that now, 64 years old and childless, I had the opportunity to be the mother that my own mother was unable to be.

Months of diligent observation, sleuthing and experimentation with diet, shampoos, anti-flea products, etc., gradually brought Alfie's health issues under control. He is thriving on home-cooked food, which involves cooking chicken and fish, while I meditate on what it means to be a vegetarian living with an animal whose recent ancestor is a wolf. After forty years of being a vegetarian, I must diligently practice non-attachment to views.

Alfie is a miniature schnauzer, bred for generations to sniff out rats and moles. He perceives the world through his nose, processing smells with an organ that is thousands of times more sensitive than mine. He often stands for minutes, nose in the air, mouth slightly open, as though gulping vast quantities of information. Envious, I try the same technique and am often startled to discover subtle scents that normally escape my notice—a woody dampness, a faint aroma of honeysuckle. Recently, I've noticed how my daily reading and computer use over-taxes my eyes. On these excursions with Alfie, I consciously focus on smelling and hearing, removing my glasses to force other senses to engage.

I marvel at Alfie's unrelenting cheerfulness and openness to strangers, whether human or canine. Everyone is a potential friend. He does not discriminate, even against aggressive dogs. I've seen him stand nose-to-nose with a snarling terrier, remaining calm and patient, his little tail wagging hopefully, as if to say, "You're having a wrong perception. I'm really your friend." He even likes cats, and, amazingly, has befriended some on our daily route. Because of him, within weeks I knew all of our new neighbors and their dogs, quickly feeling welcomed into the community. Alfie's gentle disposition and sensitivity to the feelings of others enabled a



Alfie, sitting

sangha-member with a life-long terror of animals, to befriend a dog for the first time. Several years ago I identified alienation from nature as a significant source of my suffering. I vowed to spend more time outdoors. In spite of my good intentions, I consistently fell short in my attempt to satisfy my need. Alfie has changed that. Early this morning, walking in the first crisp weather after a stifling summer, I'm so grateful this little dog came into my life. Twice a day, rain or shine, hot or cold, we explore the neighborhood and the many state and local nature preserves in our area. Our outings have stirred long forgotten memories of playing in the woods as a child and reminded me that my childhood was not all suffering. These pleasant memories have taken me by surprise and changed the way I view my past.

When Alfie and I walk together, he has no agenda, no goal. He is not exercising to improve his cardio-vascular fitness, to set a new speed record or to arrive at a particular destination. He has mastered being in the moment. I emulate his non-attachment to goals, but with less consistent success.

I don't know how Alfie became such a wise and gentle teacher after his traumatic abandonment and years surviving in the wild, but he consistently challenges and inspires me in my practice. He reminds me that even additional responsibility can be a treasure chest full of riches, if I keep my heart and my mind open. To my astonishment, this unwanted relationship with a canine bodhisattva has provided me with exactly the medicine I need. Now, I can honestly say, "I do want this dog!"

SELF-DOUBT

by Garrett Phelan

“One thing I know beyond doubt. Had [Babbage] ever heard someone he respected praise him highly it would have sweetened life for him for more than a day. We are starved for praise. It reconciles us to life... Self-doubt is at the core of our being. We need people who by their attitude and words will convince us that we are not as bad as we think we are. Hence the vital role of judicious praise.” (Eric Hoffer)

Where do self-doubt, poor self-image, or those feelings of “not good enough” originate?

We receive so many external signals: from our parents, our school teachers, our bosses, tests, evaluations, and on and on. We have so many judges that keep prodding at us and often fill us with self-doubt. Who tells us which signals to listen to, and which ones *not* to listen to?

A friend of mine shared with me that his whole life, he has been full of fear of not being good enough. He is a PhD, went to top colleges, and has been successful in his career; now he runs his own consulting business. Still, even today he feels less than good enough, often doubting himself and his capabilities, always measuring himself against others. He shared with me the pain he feels as he now realizes that his son, too, has low self-esteem. He is just beginning to become aware of how he has passed on the fears *he* has to his son, because his son does not live up to his standards or wishes.

I see so many, including myself, who suffer from self-doubt: the resident self-critic.

A definition of the human condition I found is that “while universally accepted ideals are to be *cooperative, loving* and *selfless*, humans are variously *competitive, aggressive* and *selfish*. Humans are capable of immense love and sensitivity, but we are also capable of greed,

hatred, brutality, rape, murder and war. The subconscious guilt and agony of being unable to explain this contradictory capacity has been the burden of human life: the human condition.”
www.worldtransformation.com

We come to sangha because we need support to understand how to live well with our contradictory capacities, because we know we cannot understand the human journey alone. As much as we need to water the healthy seeds within us, it is not easy. We need help.

Dharma sharing is one beautiful way we bring out from underneath the surface our struggle, guilt, and agony with the human condition. At the same time it reveals to us that we all share in this burden of being human. Dharma sharing is a communal opening of the heart that allows us to open our own heart and begin the healing of self. It re-teaches us self-blessing.

We often need to be “re-told in words and touch how lovely we are so we can flower again, from within, of self-blessing.” (Galway Kinnell)

Think of those moments in your life when someone you loved or highly respected praised you judiciously. I call it authentic praise. Such praise touches you deeply so you remember your loveliness. What happiness!

But I have been thinking how we are re-taught our loveliness. We have little control over what people we respect and love say to us or how they behave toward us. In many cases, those people who could re-teach us our loveliness may instead be the ones who have quite the opposite effect by their criticalness. What to do?

Do we offer *judicious praise -- authentic praise* -- to our loved ones, our colleagues, to others in our words, actions and attitude? If we developed this as a practice could this also be a way of re-teaching ourselves our own loveliness? Without doubt?

UPCOMING EVENTS

(Please visit the MPCF website for updates and directions.)

Ongoing Activities in the UUCF Chapel (Program Building)

Morning Guided Sitting Meditation:

Opportunity to relax, sit quietly and comfortably. Practice enjoying each moment of sitting and mindful walking.

Monday to Friday 8:15-9:15 am (except Thursday)
Thursday 8:00-9:00 am

Morning Mindful Movement:

Learn to be mindful with movements. Improve one's health and vitality with soft physical exercises, Taiji and Qigong.

Thursday 9:15-10:00 am

Noon Guided Sitting Meditation:

Thursday 12:00-12:45 pm

Thursday Evenings Meditation:

A peaceful evening of meditation, mindful movements, walking meditation and dharma sharing. Every Thursday from 7:30-9:00 pm

First Thursday of month: Recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and Dharma talk by Anh-Huong.

Tea and cookies 6:45-7:25pm. Sitting begins at 7:30pm. Before meditation you are invited to join us for tea and cookies any time between 6:30 and 7:20 pm.

Workshops & Classes

Weekend Retreat in West Virginia in 2013 led by Anh-Huong and Thu Nguyen February 22-24

From 6:00 pm Friday to 3:00 pm Sunday.
Practicing mindfulness in a rural setting for the whole weekend, together with a loving and supportive community.

Days and Half Days of Mindfulness led by Anh-Huong and Thu Nguyen

(see website for details)

Saturdays at the MPCF in Oakton, Virginia (in the Chapel) Dec. 15 (half day), Jan. 12 (half day), Jan. 26 (full day), Feb. 9 (half day)

Special Classes and Events

(see the website for updates)

- **Transmission of The Five Mindfulness Trainings Ceremony on January 5th at the MPCF.**
- **New Year's Eve Celebration Dec 31 2012**

Submission Guidelines

Along The Path is a newsletter of the art of mindful living. Practicing mindfulness cultivates understanding, love, compassion, and joy. This practice helps us to take care of and transform suffering in our lives and in our society.

Along The Path is intended as an inspiration and teaching resource for those practicing mindfulness in daily life.

Writers: please submit stories, poems, photos, art and teachings on mindfulness, based on your direct experience of transformation through the practice of mindfulness. Instead of giving academic or intellectual views, the teachings emphasize simple and successful ways to transform the difficulties and limitations in our lives so that each day becomes an experience of peace, happiness, and freedom. Send submissions to Garrett Phelan at: gjphelan@gmail.com

Along the Path

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