



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

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Flush the Internal Toilet of Your Mind	
	Ian Prattis 1
Zapatistas	Joseph Emet..... 2
Get A Life	Anna Quindlen 3
Pine Gate Sangha Council	4
Brief to Canada Lands Company	
	Joe Kennedy 5
Day of Mindfulness	Chau Luong 7
Walking Meditation	Thich Nhat Hanh 8
How Was I to Know?	Trish Johnson..... 8
Awakened	Trish Johnson..... 8
Playfulness	Michael McCulloch 9
Consuming Compassion	Amanda Cameron..... 9
Self Care	Ashley Poole..... 11
The Living Years	Rebecca Taft..... 12
OI Training	Tracey Pickup 13
Laughter Yoga	Sophie Terrasse..... 14
Spirit of Silence	Ian Skelley 15
Lazy Days of Summer June 2007 Program	16
Annual Retreat	16
Joseph Campbell & Failsafe Ian Prattis.....	17

Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate Sangha, who practice engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Friends of the sangha also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of 500-700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience are appreciated. The Pine Gate Sangha has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of sangha insight. Effortlessly it appears.

Ian Prattis provides dharma talks and teachings that encourage practice through deep non-action, so that

engaged practice (action) emerges from understanding and compassion. Carolyn Hill teaches a regular Qi-Gong class at Pine Gate Meditation Hall as an introduction to mindfulness practice. The Pine Gate Sangha welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.

Flush the Internal Toilet of Your Mind

Ian Prattis

Stepping out on the environmental stage is one part of the Global Warming dance. It cannot be fully effective until the internal choreography is in place, which is why I address global issues of environmental pollution and degradation through the discipline of meditation. That is my initial responsibility and rests on key spiritual qualities of responsiveness grounded in responsibility. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* was explicit about this:

Now there were some terrible seeds on the planet that was the home of the little prince; and these were the seeds of the baobab. The soil of that planet was infested with them. A baobab is something you will never, never be able to get rid of if you attend to it too late, it spreads over the entire planet. It bores clear through it with its roots. And if the planet is too small, and the baobabs are too many they split it into pieces... "It is a question of discipline," the little prince said to me later on. "When you've finished

your own toilet in the morning, then it is time to attend to the toilet of your planet, just so, with the greatest care..... It is very tedious work," the little prince added "but very easy!"

We flush the internal toilet of our mind by pulling up regularly all the “baobabs” and garbage of our inner ecology through meditation and self-healing; then attending to the toilet of the planet will be very easy. Although the excerpt from the Little Prince is not a good translation – it does serve well. The phrase “*faire sa toilette*” means to wash up and get ready for the new day and includes the whole process of morning hygiene to getting dressed. It is a polite phrase that readily lends itself to taking care of the planet. To neglect care for the planet by sitting on the fence, and resisting the radical and costly change to a carbon neutral economy, ensures that the “baobabs” from our mind and habit energies will create an uninhabitable planet for our species. If there were an ancient biologist on Mars studying a million years of earth history, she would note a parasitic infestation of Planet Earth that was not very intelligent. An intelligent parasite would ensure the good health of the host that supports it. And so the Martian biologist would factor in an elimination date for our species in her star-date log.

But there is such a thing as higher intelligence - a level of knowing that emerges from diligent meditation and the practice of awareness. Our goal in meditation is to heal and transform not only our selves, but also our place on the planet. Meditation is a progressive movement towards wholeness and integration, and requires that we look deeply into the environment we are located in, and the environment we create with our thoughts, attitudes and values. In the process of meditation we liberate ourselves from internal blockages created by maladaptive patterns of inner ecology, and are then able to enter a state of clarity and compassion. Thus we transform by personally experiencing different cognitive and perceptual levels that enable us to transcend internal “baobabs”. This inward step to refine consciousness enables us to create adaptive

solutions for Global Warming from a foundation of wisdom and confidence in our clarity. What we do now has consequences for our future. The consequences of not acting now are much more costly than the massive investment in an alternative economy and way of life.

The Future is Now! We prepare for the future through present mindfulness and astute awareness about the consequences of our actions. This ripples through to future generations and to Mother Earth, enabling a sustainable earth culture to emerge. Just flush the internal toilet of your mind. *“It is a question of discipline.....very tedious work, but quite easy.”*

Zapatistas

Joseph Emet

Joseph is a dharmacharya practicing in Montreal when he is not weaving magic with his music. In San Cristobal, Chiapas, Mexico he witnessed Zapatista engagement with world wide indigenous peoples working for peace and mother earth.

Here and there, I cross paths with indigenous peoples and their culture. The taste of each encounter lingers on, and I want more. I traveled to San Cristobal on a hunch, and I was not disappointed. T shirts on the street said, “Each for Everyone”, “Justice and Equality” and they displayed the star, the emblem of revolutionary thinking outside the box. A nice change from what you see elsewhere in Mexico on T-shirts, such as: “Looking for boyfriend with car” or the skull-and-bones. Storefronts in San Cristobal displayed Beatriz Aurora’s postcards and posters — a view of the starry heavens with a woman seated on the moon wearing a flowery blouse and rowing toward distant galaxies using a paintbrush for an oar, or her images of paradise and the harmony of nature. A vegetarian restaurant urged me to consider mindful eating and mindful consuming on its menu, carefully explaining that the simple everyday choices we make have vast planetary consequences. This is a recurrent theme: Zapatistas have been known to throw roadblocks around troubled

communities thus preventing the flow of booze and drugs. Bookstores featured tracts on the Dignity of Women.

Mayan culture manifests everywhere: in the craft markets where the cool evening temperatures fuel a ready market for attractive handmade wool clothing. Sheep are kept only for their wool in the surrounding hamlets and are not butchered for meat. In the cemeteries where people are buried with the items closest to their heart—their cell phone! In the village churches where there are no sermons or preaching nor pews: the floor is covered thick with pine needles, with maybe a thousand candles burning, as people huddle around to chant and pray in small groups. Statues of the saints have a mirror in the place of the heart where you see yourself reflected. Mirrors in the flowery crosses between houses reflect the divinity within the looker. The cross has been a Mayan symbol for a few thousand years before the Spaniards arrived, and represents harmony: harmony between neighbors, and harmony between Heaven and Earth.

though. In watching news footage from that era, I was touched to see that many of the men were carrying handmade wooden rifles! This did not prevent the Mexican army from massacring them with their real guns and American supplied helicopters. The American involvement, according to news sources, came as a result of the fact that the Zapatistas were questioning the very foundations of free-market capitalism and exploitation. Americans, as the story goes, had learned a lesson in Cuba and wanted this threatening movement nipped in the bud. Today, the Zapatista movement is a cultural phenomenon. I was able to assist in the first worldwide encounter of the 32 autonomous Zapatista communities with indigenous communities worldwide. The four day encounter took place in the countryside, and featured exhibits and talks on education, health issues, women's rights, and seed saving—a big issue in this age of terminator and genetically modified seeds.

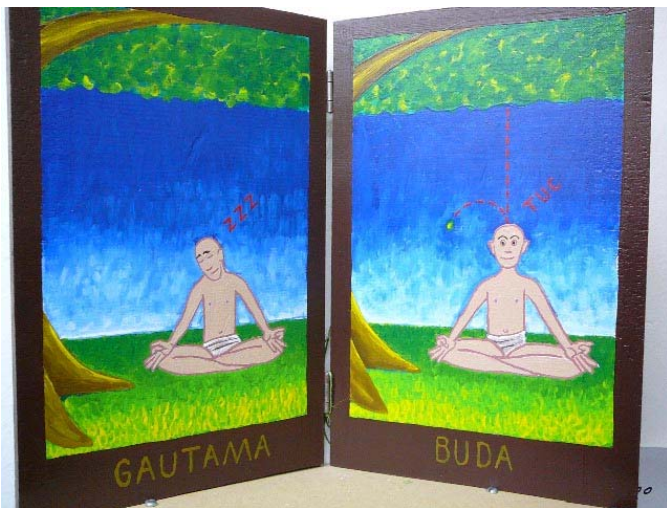
I found myself among compassionate people trying to create a more compassionate world.

Get A Life

Anna Quindlen

Anna Quindlen is a US Pulitzer Prize-winning author. This selection is published in Resurgence January/February 2007.

Get a life. A real life, not a manic pursuit of the next promotion, the bigger pay-check, the larger house. Do you think you'd care so very much about those things if you blew an aneurism one afternoon, or found a lump in your breast? Get a life in which you notice the smell of salt water pushing itself on a breeze, a life in which you stop and watch how a red-tailed hawk circles over the water or the way a baby scowls with concentration when she tries to pick a berry with her thumb and first finger. Get a life in which you are not alone. Find people you love, and who love you. And remember that love is not leisure – it is work.



Zapatista cartoon in San Cristobal

This culture is also manifest in the Zapatista movement. During the armed struggle that started on January 1st, 1994 (the day the NAFTA agreement went into effect), women carried guns with the men, creating instant equality between them. I do not know if they ever used the guns

Get a life in which you are generous. And realize that life is the best thing ever; and that you have no business taking it for granted. Care so deeply about its goodness that you want to spread it around. Take money you would have spent on beer and give it to charity. Work in a soup kitchen, be a big brother or sister. Everyone wants to do well. But if you do no good too, then doing well is never enough. It is so easy to waste our lives, our days, our minutes. It is so easy to exist instead of to live. I learned to live many years ago. I learned to love the journey, not the destination. I learned that it is not a dress rehearsal, and that today is the only guarantee you will get. I learned to look at the good in the world and try to give some of it back because I believed in it, completely and utterly. And I tried to do that, in part, by telling others what I had learned. By telling them this: consider the lilies in the field. Eat in the backyard with the sun in your face. Learn to be happy. And think of life as a terminal illness, because if you do, you will live it with joy and passion as it ought to be lived.

Pine Gate Sangha Council

The Sangha Council gathered on March 1, 2007. At Pine Gate the entire sangha, both physically and virtually present, constitutes the governing body of the community providing a reality check on practice, programs and organization. The three components of the annual Pine Gate schedule were endorsed as serving the community well:

1. Fall Study Session – September to December
2. Winter Study Session – January to May
3. Lazy Days of Summer program – June to August

With retreats, Days of Mindfulness, sweat-lodges, Healing Fairs, hikes and Friends for Peace events – the cornerstones in the sangha were thanked for their incredible volunteer effort. In particular, the Lazy Days of Summer program was considered to be important as it provided openings for other traditions, practices and interests to be presented to the sanghabody. The role of Pine Gate as the

nucleus of Friends for Peace was also endorsed as a vital aspect of the sangha's engaged nature.

The main discussion was on the future form of Pine Gate. There is a vision to become part of an eco-community at Carp Ridge, which means that in the foreseeable future there may be two Pine Gates – Pine Gate In The City and Pine Gate Carp Ridge. The latter requires further detailed and ongoing discussions with the Carp Ridge executive-director and Board of Governors and will take a number of years to come to any fruition.

Pine Gate Carp Ridge

The vision entails the construction of an eco-residential practice community with a 3 storey building, solar powered and off grid. The main floor will be a meditation hall with an additional common kitchen, dining and gathering area. The remaining 2 floors will be 4 or 5 self-contained residential units (single and double) with a small meditation hall with skylights in the roof area. There would be a regular daily practice of morning meditation, working meditation, mindful meal in the evening, and evening meditation. In addition the usual kind of sangha program would continue with a regular sangha night, First Saturday and all the other regular stuff that Pine Gate engages with. As Carp Ridge is a further 20 minutes west of our present location and not well served by bus routes, this potential move will require a major effort of sangha building drawing on the Carp, Stittsville and Kanata communities. As a residential community there will also be an emphasis on ecology and spirituality and specific courses and classes will be offered in Pine Gate Meditation Hall to reflect these priorities. The Meditation Hall would be a sacred space that would also be available for Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi-Gong classes and so on. In addition we have to discuss with our friends at Carp Ridge about becoming not only self sufficient in vegetable products with organic horticulture but to establish some form of Community Supported Agriculture. This could be either a joint venture or a Pine Gate venture depending on where energy and priorities

lay. This would also be the HQ of Friends for Peace – a registered non profit organisation.

Pine Gate In The City

This requires attention to location, equipment needs, structure, program, organization, teaching and finances. The sensitive issue of *dana* will also have to be discussed, as the experience at present is that it does not work too well in Canadian culture. The same issue has to be addressed for the Pine Gate Carp Ridge vision as classes and dharma instruction will likely have to be on a fee basis rather than on a *dana* basis.

The discussion zeroed in on *dana* vs fees, and the consensus was that *dana* should be periodically explained to the sanghabody. Other aspects of discussion focused on library usage, links between the future components of Pine Gate – at Carp Ridge and In The City – with ipod and speaker telephone links to connect Pine Gate Carp Ridge and Pine Gate In The City for dharma and teaching. The term Pine Gate Carp Ridge does not represent a done deal. This is a statement of vision. There is much to be worked out in some detail. For further discussion on Pine Gate In The City, a steering committee was formed with Linda Ehrichs, Mark Stokes, Joe Kennedy and Emily King kindly volunteering to address the many practical issues to be thought about and carefully planned for. They will report back to the sanghabody in due course.

The discussion continued over chocolate cake and tea – it just had to be someone's birthday.

Brief to Canada Lands Company Joe Kennedy and Ian Prattis

We have a number of suggestions for the Project Manager at Canada Lands Company with respect to the vision for the Rockcliffe eco-community.

1. A major suggestion is to encourage the investigation of eco-communities in Scandinavia and Scotland where conditions

are reasonably similar to those in Ottawa, Canada. The case examples of Hammarby-Sjostad in Sweden and Findhorn in Scotland are contrasting examples – and would enable the planners to see what works and what does not. The Swedish example is more of a residential eco-community with a commercial sector, which seems closest to the present design for the Rockcliffe project. We have some reservations about this, as ecological education is not a major focus. Hammarby-Sjostad in Sweden is certainly a good place to live but that extra effort to leave the car behind, save energy or streamline water use and conservation are not priorities for those living there. The Findhorn example, on the other hand, has a Teaching and Learning Centre, advocacy role and spiritual basis to it, and this brings different considerations to the planning process, as it encompasses much of the existing design and vision for Rockcliffe but within a different framework.

Findhorn is the founder of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) with focus on renewable energy systems, ecological buildings and social businesses www.ecovillagefindhorn.com It is also a teaching and learning centre for ecology and spirituality and directly deals with the consciousness required to get humanity through this century with some measure of dignity. Prattis gave a talk and retreat there in 2004, and was impressed by the way Findhorn had re-invented itself to take on the realities of Global Warming

2. Sustainable Community – some pointers:
 - a. Residents can sign a pledge that they understand the objectives of a sustainable community and that they are prepared to modify their living practices in order to achieve sustainable objectives and all properties deeded to

- the system. This will trigger a behavioral change.
- b. Sustainable waste management is an ideal community activity and prime mover in galvanizing a community to achieve sustainable objectives for a common good.
 - c. For waste management, sustainable objectives mean reduce, reuse, recycle, and source separate, striving to be a zero waste community. For example, in 1996-97 during a pilot operation in Munster Hamlet, 86% landfill diversion of waste was achieved.
 - d. Strategically located and well-designed depots about the community consisting of five attractive bins for different materials such as: metals, plastics, paper, organic, and other. Depots emptied two to three times per week. Eliminate door-to-door waste collection.
 - e. Community waste receiving and sorting centre to receive depot collected materials, in addition to E waste, white goods, batteries and hazardous waste.
 - f. Waste centre would include an in vessel composting facility and outdoor curing, together with garden plots incorporating biodynamic and organic farming principles. It is well documented that community farming and garden plots for urban dwellers provide many social, environmental and economic benefits to the community. Conversion of organics into compost and soil amendments can be used in various community projects from organic food growing to horticultural applications.
 - g. Sewage management is another source of organic waste to be considered. A small bore sewer system incorporating separators at the source, removal and composting of solids, treating liquids in a central greenhouse based sewage system and constructed wetlands. The Findhorn community have established this in their community along the lines proposed by John and Nancy Todd, ecologists in Vermont – see *Prattis: The Essential Spiral* (2002: 203).
 - h. Community based green power - eg: solar.
3. In the Rockcliffe design there is a plan for a varied community with mixed housing, high rises and other housing unit types but is it possible for employment opportunities in the community to be matched with housing opportunities, so that workers do not have to commute into the area for work?
 4. Taking a cue from the European “Slow Food” movement, where daily markets, family owned restaurants and outlets define a village character and community; will the fast food chains be excluded? Also the Walmarts and Superstores?
 5. Neglected so far in the planning vision, as far as we are able to discern, is the lack of discussion on spiritual aspects as the vital integrator of community life – See Findhorn above. Friends for Peace is a multi-faith, multi cultural coalition with an agenda for peace, social justice and planetary care and we have learned just how much of a community builder this interfaith movement is. In other words is there a planning vision for churches, mosques, temples and synagogues? Will the interfaith community be invited to present their views and wishes?
 6. Annual festivals in the Rockcliffe eco community such as an Eco-Fair would go a long way to creating an active and well informed community and also create inter community bonds. Also soccer/cricket/basketball/volleyball matches between the different villages in the eco-community. In other words – will there be an integrated recreational set of facilities for the Rockcliffe eco community?
 7. On multi purpose architectural design eg: the Salus building, where one of our members works and reports on the novelty working very well; also the Conservation

Co-op as an example of social housing, grey water management, composting, gardening and community solidarity – are these examples in Ottawa being examined?



Joe with friends

The previous brief to City Hall by Friends for Peace had components well covered by other group submissions to CLC, so rather than re-invent the wheel we have narrowed items down to those that we hope will be most helpful.

Joe Kennedy, P. Eng www.wciwasteconversion.ca
 Professor Ian. Prattis www.ianprattis.com

Day of Mindfulness

Chau Luong

When conditions are sufficient, a form or energy will arise. Over the years, I have read books from the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and various religious teachers. However, it was only last summer that I started to practice meditation regularly with a sangha at Pine Gate. And in

December, at the end of an evening gathering, in a quiet moment, Ian mentioned about the Day of Mindfulness on January 6, 2007 and asked if I was interested in receiving the Five Mindfulness Trainings transmission, as he knew about my previous experience of retreats with Thay and the Dalai Lama. I readily accepted.

The Day of Mindfulness started gently with an opening sitting meditation session. When the calmness of our mind started to settle down, we gathered in a circle to watch a movie titled 'My Life Is My Message' about Thay. The movie featured scenes from Plum Village, its serene landscape, Thay and the sisters, the big Bell and the retreat for the Middle-East Sangha. The Middle-East retreat had members from the two conflicting zones. They were recounting their heart-breaking personal loss and injuries caused by the war and by misunderstanding. It was obvious that every body is suffering and losing, though Plum Village had something unique to offer – to see that the "other's" suffering was no different to our own. To me, this movie falls into the category of movies to be watched again and again for deeper study. I can still remember pictures such as the simple snapshot of a pair of eye glasses on a table, and the image of a pair of sandals on the floor. The eye glasses tell me to look deeply in order to understand, and the sandals say that we can always walk away from a wrong path, take charge and turn our footsteps towards the right direction of walking the Bodhisattva path.

As Carolyn explained to us, on a Day of Mindfulness, we try to leave behind our daily worries in order to spend time with the Sangha to practice mindfulness together, to purify our mind and body. So prior to lunch, we practiced Qi Gong with Carolyn. I found it very re-energizing physically as she was showing us the movements to get rid of negative energy and to re-balance our internal system. After Qi Gong, we had a formal vegetarian lunch taken in Noble Silence and afterwards went for a walking meditation alongside

Pinecrest Creek, breathing in the fresh, crisp winter air.

The Day of Mindfulness culminated beautifully with the ceremony in which Trish, Bertie and I were taking the Five Mindfulness Trainings transmission from our teacher - Ian. In a formal ceremony surrounded with the wonderful, positive aura of the Sangha, we committed to practice and follow the path of the awakened mind of the Buddha. In his teachings, Thay mentions that our roots are not just our biological ancestors, but also current living teachers and spiritual ancestors such as the bodhisattvas and the holy community that have guided and enlightened us through the course of a lifetime. After the Five Mindfulness Trainings transmission ceremony, I know that I have added a few more names to my long list of teachers.

With gratitude,
Chau Luong,
Compassionate Essence of the Source

Walking Meditation

Thich Nhat Hanh & Anh-Huong Nguyen

Review by Wisdom Books of this very complete package – book, CD with meditations and DVD. Hard back, 56 pages, now available from Parallax Press at www.parallax.org Highly recommended!

This new set includes: a book, CD with five guided meditations, and DVD. The first comprehensive instructional program in this serene spiritual practice to help you walk with a presence and peace of mind whether in nature or on a busy street. Thich Nhat Hanh shows how to recognize the miracle in simply walking – not as a means to an end but as an opportunity to touch the fullness of life: reversing “habit energy” through its unification of body and mind, using walking meditation to work with difficult emotions such as anger and anxiety. There is a Buddhist concept known as *Apranihita*, or the spirit of “wishlessness”, in which one neither pursues desires nor flees from

discomfort. With Walking Meditation, we can rediscover “our home in the here and now, as the long road we all must walk turns to quiet joy.”

How Was I to Know?

Trish Johnson

Shared on International Women's Day at Pine Gate - March 8, 2007 - with readings about great women through the centuries. Facilitated by Nadia who spoke movingly on sisterhood in the sangha, following a chant for Mother Earth by Tricia.

Long ago I was a seed under the snow,
Needing sunlight but frozen in the shadows.
I envisioned the light and tried to grow
But cold, alone, and by myself,
I could not be well nurtured.

The world was not against me, though I once
thought so
Filled with despair and a lump in my throat, I
couldn't get air.
How was I to know that to live fully and completely, I
simply had to breathe?
Breathe deeply in, breathe calmly out, and trust in
Mother Earth.
How was I to know, if my mother did not teach me?

Now that I know the power of breath, I will breath
it.
And by living peace, joy, compassion and
equanimity,
I will teach my children that to love yourself
enough to breath deeply
Is a gift to give back to Gaia, our Mother Earth-
She whom we all must nurture and to Her, I bow
In Gratitude.

Awakened

Trish Johnson

I see what some may think is not there
Pure glint of the sun
turns gold the chlorophyll green leaves.

Feeling energy rise with the morning light
Powerful and subtle
Hidden like the sun behind the trees

Not there, for those who do not see.

Calm is in the air
Just behind the pines
Waiting for a smile
to breath it in

Seeing with a third eye
The movement of the breeze
Before I feel it on my skin

Open your arms
Breathe Deep
Let the Heaven's Rush in!

Playfulness, Curiosity and Wonder

Michael McCulloch

This morning, Sasha and I went out for a walk
In the fields covered in snow
on the bluff overlooking the river
Sticking up through the snow
were small pieces of grass and straw
covered in snowflakes
A winter field of dandelions
gone to seed

Two years ago when Sasha was a puppy
and no more than 8 inches tall,
we would run together
through these fields -
Sasha disappearing beneath the grass and wild
flowers
only to re-appear covered in fluff

This morning as he ran in large circles
his beautiful body fully extended
and with me pretending to give chase in smaller
circles,
I slipped and found my self lying on my back
looking up at a dog
with snow and icicles hanging from his beard

Arms behind my head and pinned to the ground
he began to lick my nose

The harder I laughed the more he licked
moving from my nose
to my forehead
my cheeks
my lips
and my chin

He stopped
and for about a minute
stood perfectly still atop my chest
looking up at the sky
sniffing the breeze

Consuming Compassion

Amanda Cameron

Amanda is a sangha "Blogging Queen." With two other students from Carleton University – Ashley and Rebecca – she is doing a tutorial with Ian on Engaged Buddhism. This involves practice with Pine Gate and the presentation of experience and thoughts via blogs. The next three articles are taken from their impressive body of work.

When seeds are planted in our consciousness, they must be nurtured before they can sprout and grow strong. We must be careful which seeds we nurse since our store consciousness contains dangerous seeds, such as those of ignorance and delusion that are toxic to our health. The Buddha identified the store consciousness, the deepest level of consciousness that contains everything, as the fourth nutriment for the spiritual pilgrimage. (The first nutriment is edible food, followed by sense impression food, and the third is the food of volition.)

Our store consciousness consumes what we consume. All that we feed those first three nutriments is consumed by our store consciousness; and because it is our store consciousness that drives us, we must

always be conscious of what we consume. Still, our store consciousness contains more than we choose to consume, such as our karma. We must become consciously aware of the negative karma that pollutes our inner ecology. In doing so we can make decisions to not water seeds of suffering. Or we can go further. We can transform the seeds in our store consciousness. By acknowledging *manas*, the base of mind consciousness that is the root of our delusions of separation, we can move beyond our ego attachment and ignorance - into awakening. Meditation and mindfulness practice allow us to transform the seeds of store consciousness, and ultimately *manas*, so we can grow on our spiritual journey.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings plant the seeds for the mindfulness practice we must nurture during our spiritual journey. All of the trainings consider the importance of conscious and compassionate consumption. When we water wholesome seeds in our store consciousness, we nourish our heart consciousness. Here we see the connectedness of consciousness, and it is in our heart consciousness that we find our true self. When we choose to consume with compassion and mindfulness, we become closer to our true self. It may seem easy enough, but the truth is that most of us struggle with this everyday of our life. The struggle can be seen as we strive for freedom from suffering. We know that making choices about how we consume can expand our consciousness. Yet we sometimes struggle to make the right choices; sometimes we don't know what the right choices are; and other times we may not know we have a choice. By committing ourselves to continual learning and mindfulness practice we can make mindful choices with greater ease.

In the supermarket we are faced with so many choices that the experience can seem overwhelming. We decide whether we will consume nourishing foods; but this is not the only choice we are faced with. We also decide how much money we are willing to spend for certain foods; how much time we will spend in preparing our food; how much thought we put into our choices. Some of us could actually learn something about ourselves and our values if we were able see ourselves shopping. Do we rush down the aisles carelessly filling our carts with everything on special. Or do we engage in voluntary simplicity as the second mindfulness training suggests, buying only what we need. Do we make ethical consumption choices?

Not long ago I became concerned that my consumption choices were careless. After considering how little I knew about so much of what I consumed, I decided I would change. I began by looking for ethical corporations and was soon left feeling lost in a pile of scattered information. It is easy to reflect upon my experience and see that this is all that could have come from such a scattered state of mind. But at the time, it wasn't so clear. We can become overwhelmed if we overload our consciousness with too much. This is why it is so important that we meditate. From this clarity we can make choices that support ourselves, society, and the environment. Choosing to become vegetarian, we consider the first mindfulness training lessons on consumption. We can also buy organics and choose to buy our products locally. I've found the atmosphere of the farmer's markets and local stores such as Herb & Spice much friendlier and more enjoyable to shop at than big supermarkets. Though sometimes more expensive, I've found myself buying only what I need. Most importantly, I've also realized a fanatical

attitude towards corporations, consumption, and judgments about others consumption will do no good for no one. Only from the clarity that comes from meditation can we act in a way that brings us closer to our true self.

<http://amandasengagedbuddhism.blogspot.com/>

Self Care

Ashley Poole

Many of us have so many responsibilities in life that we forget to take care of ourselves. And while it's hard to prioritize something like taking a bath when you have so many other priorities in life, self-care is an important aspect of stress management. My life is full of roles and layers. I have been trying to balance my responsibilities and obligations relating to work and school for the first time. Never before during my four years in university have I attempted to work full time and I must admit, I now know why! It is a constant struggle trying to maintain good grades on top of fulfilling my workplace duties and expectations; I am trying to prove myself in two different worlds. Oftentimes, I feel as though my candle is being burned from both ends.

I have recently incorporated meditation into my daily routine as a means to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety and it has truly worked wonders for me. If I had to say that there was a miracle cure for almost every problem in life, I would have to choose conscious breathing. This discovery came as such a revelation for me, since it's something that we all take for granted. Most of us don't realize we can use relaxed breathing to help control our emotions, reduce stress, quiet our body, and focus on our thoughts. When I am tense and stressed, conscious breathing returns my body to a normal level. So when I am facing an important decision, I stop and breathe. Conscious breathing and being aware of the present moment and recognizing that it is a wonderful moment - I can practice it anywhere, I have experienced conscious breathing at home,

sitting on the bus, at school, at work, at a coffee shop, wherever I am throughout the day.

There are so many exercises to help me breath consciously. I usually recite these four lines silently as I breathe in and out:

Breathing in, I calm my body.

Breathing out, I smile.

Dwelling in the present moment,

I know this is a wonderful moment.

"Breathing in, I calm my body". Reciting this line is like drinking a glass of cool lemonade on a hot day - the coolness permeates my body. When I breathe in and recite this line, I actually feel my breath calming my body and mind.

"Breathing out, I smile". Smiling relaxes hundreds of muscles in my face. Wearing a smile on your face is a sign that you are a master of yourself.

"Dwelling in the present moment." While I sit here, I do not think of anything else. I sit here, and I know exactly where I am.

"I know this is a wonderful moment". It is a joy to sit, stable and at ease, and return to my breathing, my smiling, my true nature. My appointment with life is in the present moment. If we do not have peace and joy right now, when will we have peace and joy - tomorrow, or the day after? What is preventing me from being happy right now in this very moment. Why am I so stressed? As I follow my breathing, I simply say, "Calming, Smiling, Present Moment, Wonderful Moment" and all of my negatives feelings seem to wash away. Perhaps my greatest revelation about meditation is that it has given me the ability to live for today and to enjoy each moment. I used to always spend my todays making plans for my tomorrows. Meditation provides me with the ability to embrace each moment. I believe that every human being has an innate desire for happiness and does not want to suffer. I also believe that the very purpose of life is to experience this happiness.

In addition to conscious breathing, I have been practicing the meditation on love on a weekly basis in order to increase my sense of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity to myself and others around

me. I do this in the early morning when I awake, as at this time my mind is clear and fresh. As I sit quietly with my legs crossed in front of me, close my eyes, listen to track number two on the Pine Gate Meditations CD, and concentrate on my in and out breath I begin my meditation on love;

“I bring love to myself, I bring compassion to someone I love, I bring joy to someone I am neutral about, and I bring equanimity to someone I am having difficulties with”.

I have realized that the meditation on love is not just about sitting still and visualizing that my love, compassion, joy and equanimity will spread out into space like waves of sound or light. Sound and light have the ability to penetrate everywhere, and love, compassion, joy and equanimity certainly have the power to do the same. If our love is only a kind of imagination, then it is not likely to have any real effect. It is in the midst of our daily life and in our actual contact with others that we can know whether our mind of love is really present and how stable it actually is. If love is real, I believe it will be evident in our daily lives, in the way in which we relate with people and the world. As Thich Nhat Hanh states “one word, one action, or one thought can reduce another person’s suffering and bring him joy”. One word can give comfort and confidence, destroy doubts, help someone avoid a mistake, reconcile a conflict, or open the door to liberation. One action can save a person’s life or help them take advantage of a rare opportunity. One thought can do the same, because thoughts always lead to words and actions. If love is truly in our hearts, every thought, word, and deed can bring about a miracle.

*“May the poor find wealth,
Those weak with sorrow find joy.
May the forlorn find new hope,
Constant happiness and prosperity.*

*May the frightened cease to be afraid,
And those bound be free.
May the weak find power,
And may their hearts join in friendship”.*

The Dalai Lama: An Open Heart - Practicing Compassion in Everyday Life

<http://meditationtranquility.blogspot.com/>

The Living Years

Rebecca Taft

"You can hear as well as you can listen" – Mike and the Mechanics

A few weeks ago Ian handed me a copy of the lyrics to a song called The Living Years written by Mike and the Mechanics. It reflected the same subject that I had written about in my previous blog about an argument that I had with my father about ecology and global warming. The song is about the misunderstandings that exist between people of different generations. It is written from the perspective of a child who feels trapped and burdened by the choices that were made by the preceding generation. By the end of the song it is clear how the bitterness that we harbor towards our parental generation is not helpful in solving the problems that we face today. There are a lot of great lines that jumped off the page as I read the lyrics of this song. My favourite was;

“We only sacrifice the future; and it’s the bitterness that lasts.”

After reading this, I realized how foolish it was to blame my father for his opinions, because it does not solve anything. The arguments that we have only foster feelings of bitterness and resentment between us, and I know that I will regret having these feelings when I get older. When I find it hard to understand his opinions, I should try to seriously listen to his perspective, so that I can try to understand his point of view. If I can do this, maybe he will also start to listen to what I have to say. In the song it says that it is almost as if we are speaking to each other in a different language. I think that the song is referring to the way that we speak **at** each other, but we rarely listen **to** what the other has to say. The message that this song conveys is important to me. At the time when I was arguing with my father, it was difficult to articulate the sense of disconnect that I felt. It was almost

unbelievable to me that my father could argue in favor of such old excuses. I was ashamed to think that my father could not acknowledge such evident problems in our society today. I realized that a lot of what I said may have also offended him, because when we speak about environmental degradation, we are almost always implicating prior generations as the source of the problem. This reminded me of the fourth mindfulness training, because I was not fully listening to what he had to say because I was unwilling to set aside my own opinions for the moment. In this respect, the tone of the conversation was not positive.

By the end of the song, the writer realizes that this trend is inevitable from one generation to the next. I am sure that most people (if not all) have had similar experiences with their parents, although they may have not fully realized the implications of these conversations at the time. These occasional disagreements with parents may seem harmless at the time, but if we continue to blame our parents, then we cannot accept personal responsibility for the state of our society today. If this is true, then nothing will change, and we will be cast in the same light by the view of our children. The only way to make a positive change is to begin to listen to what our parents have to say, and to stop condemning them for things that we are not sure about.

<http://ebuddhism.blogspot.com/>

OI Training

Tracey Pickup

Tracey leads the Wild Rose sangha in Calgary and has joined the Pine Gate aspirants for Order of Interbeing training, which is supervised by Carolyn and supported by two dharmacharyas – Ian Prattis and Vinh Nguyen. Here is her work on the 3rd training.

Third Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering brought about when we impose our views on others, we are committed not to force others, even our children, by any means

whatsoever - such as authority, threat, money, propaganda, or indoctrination - to adopt our views. We will respect the right of others to be different and to choose what to believe and how to decide. We will, however, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness through compassionate dialogue.

As a professional peace educator and advocate, the third mindfulness training is particularly tricky. It requires lightness of heart and a balance of view. In my job I advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the control of small arms and the reduction of reliance on military to resolve conflict. I educate both young and old and am required to make speeches and write articles to this effect. Our organization calls itself a peace education organization and is committed to education about alternative methods to resolving conflict. However, education is a fine line. Even I have joked about handing out our propaganda to the public. As a result practicing this training requires me to think deeply about my job and my position in the work I do.

I believe whole-heartedly that there are means of speaking out and educating, which do not force views on others, but simply open doors of understanding. It's a difficult balance and I know that to do this well requires a constant examination of my conscience. Am I saying this to convince or manipulate this person? Am I debating and arguing to force someone to view things the way I do? How sincere am I? I firmly believe that if I am able to follow this training while continuing my work I will be much more effective in what I do. I rub up against people who see me as imposing my view all the time. People can become very hostile and vent their anger at me because my view contrasts with theirs. I have seen other peace advocates react against this by putting down the other person and the situation quickly escalates.



Tracey and the Officer. Photo by Grant Neufeld

I used to believe that it was my fault that people became hostile as a result of my advocacy, that perhaps I was indeed imposing my views. I now see that sometimes there are things that are very painful for others to discuss and view. Having to listen to a point of view one doesn't like and that is deeply important to oneself can be truly painful. I know when I am attacked and put down for what I believe - it hurts. Now I try to listen for the sincerity with which the other person expresses themselves. If someone gets angry with me I try to listen to where the pain is coming from and I believe them that it is causing them pain. However, I no longer see myself as the source of that pain. I know that many people who have advocated sincerely and without force have been persecuted. Even Thay was seen in this light by the government in Vietnam.

I try to be clear in my dialogues that my view is a view and not the only view. I try very hard, especially when educating children, that they also have views and that just because we have different views doesn't mean they necessarily oppose each other. A photo was taken of myself speaking to a NATO officer about their nuclear weapons policy. Canada has signed a treaty of nuclear non-proliferation while at the same time participating in NATO, which supports the acquisition and use of

nuclear weapons. I wanted to talk to him about this contradiction. You can see my propaganda (information pamphlets) in my pockets. We had a peaceful conversation but I could see towards the end it was painful for him. I tried to listen deeply. I was moved by his sincerity and his courage to come out of his conference to talk to me. To try to further my vow and practice with this training I will look deeply at how I am expressing my views and whether I am fully open to listening and working with others who do not share my views. I will try to express loving-kindness even in the face of hostility and try not to see my view as the only one. I will not try to manipulate others into believing what I believe but will be honest and sincere in expressing my own views.

Laughter Yoga

Sophie Terrasse

What is Laughter Yoga? Laughter yoga is a new revolution in body-mind medicine, that combines simple laughter exercises and gentle yoga breathing to enhance health and happiness. Laughter yoga produces "Happiness Chemistry" in the brain endorphins. Scientific studies have shown that doing intentional laughter will generate the same physiological and emotional benefits as "authentic" laughter. Anyone can laugh in a group without depending upon a great sense of humour, jokes, or comedy.

The Ottawa Sunflower Laughter Club opened in October 2006. All meetings are free and public (small donations are accepted to cover expenses, but not solicited). People of all ages, ethnic background and physical abilities laugh together every Sunday between 10h30 and 11h30 am (Routhier Community Center, 172 Guigues Ave, Ottawa (corner of Cumberland and St Patrick)). There is no need to register or bring anything except for a big smile and a cushion! Laughter Clubs are fully independent, not-for-profit, non-political, non-religious and non-competitive community-based associations of diverse people where all are welcome regardless of gender, age, physical

abilities, social or economic backgrounds. They practice the Laughter Yoga method of laughing for no reason as a form of exercise. It is a worldwide movement with broad appeal; there are currently over 5000 Laughter Clubs in 53 countries.

Laughter Yoga is a physically-oriented technique that uses a perfect blend of playful, empowering and otherwise “tension-releasing” laughter and breathing exercises. These exercises are simple, structured, and based on the philosophy of “acting happiness”. They are appropriate and beneficial for all, regardless of their cognitive, sensorial or motor abilities/limitations. It is a great way to build bridges and promote peace in the community and worldwide. You do not need to have a sense of humour, be happy or have any reason to laugh.

Here are 10 good reasons to come laugh with us for no reason:

1. Laughter is a stress buster. It reduces the levels of stress hormones epinephrine and cortisol.
2. Laughter strengthens the immune system and helps maintain good health.
3. Laughter is anti-aging. It increases blood supply to the face, nourishing the skin and making it glow.
4. Laughter is an aerobic exercise equivalent to any other standard aerobic exercise.
5. Laughter increases the levels of endorphins – the body’s natural pain killers.
6. Laughter helps control high blood pressure by reducing the release of stress-related hormones.
7. Laughter helps dump depression, anxiety and psychosomatic disorders.
8. *Laughter Yoga makes us more creative and imaginative. It improves our sense of humour.*
9. Laughter shrinks the hurts of everyday life to a smaller, if not inconsequential size. It interrupts the power struggle and defuses anger by releasing it. Laughter helps individuals be more self-confident and self-expressive.

Want to try Laughter Yoga? Please contact Sophie

Terrasse terrasse@rogers.com or 613-842-9771.

Sophie earned her Laughter Yoga™ certification directly from Dr Kataria, the medical doctor who founded the Laughter Yoga™ movement in Mumbai, India. Additional info on the web can be found at: www.laughteryoga.org.

Spirit of Silence

Ian Skelley

Excerpts from Ian Skelly’s review of “The Spirit of Silence: Making Space for Creativity” by John Lane. Resurgence No 240 January/February 2007.

Silence speaks. Each syllable, loaded with meaning, leads to the truth of things. But we live in a world that ignores the truth about reality. The drug of constant stimulation has brainwashed us to crave ever more distractions of its shallow attention.....As John Lane ably illustrates, silence connects us to something more vital: the inner tutor, our in-tuition; the wise voice that has no truck with fashionable thinking or media sages. Perceived in silence it amplifies what the ancients called the creative intelligence of the cosmos.

His book is a fine guide to listening to this intelligence and a detailed meditation upon the creative power of silence. He visits the lives of notable solitaires, among them the monk Robert Merton, who in the 1960s, fired by quiet contemplation inspired a “theology of resistance” to the Vietnam war, apartheid and racism and an increasingly repressive and authoritative regime. Out of his stillness came a tremendous grasp of the problems of US culture. Lane calls him a true prophet of our age.

What Lane argues for, rightly, is the restoration of a deep-seated sense of wellbeing. We should live in the moment rather than *through* it to take stock of what the moment holds. He suggests as a starting point “the observation of sunlight on a blade of grass, the sight of a beetle crawling across a leaf;

the worship of the day's most commonplace events".

In such a busy and disconnected world, silence connects us with the rich presence of the living moment. Our entire education system discourages us from experiencing this because it exposes the void on which consumerism depends. This book urges us to linger long and recognize now, before it is too late, that this intuitive presence is the key we all must take if we hope to heal the appalling severance between humans and the natural world.

Lazy Days of Summer June 2007 Program

The summer program at Pine Gate provides an opportunity for the special interests of sangha members to find a forum for appreciation. Topics and practices are brought forward from different traditions of healing and meditation, broadening our knowledge and appreciation of different forms of mindfulness. If you have a topic or speaker please notify Carolyn Hill at Chill@TierneyStauffer.com 613 726 0881.

All sessions are on a Thursday evening at Pine Gate Meditation Hall from 7.00pm – 9.00pm. Each practice opportunity begins with sitting and walking meditation, with a further period of silent sitting meditation, then the presentation and dharma discussion about it. At 9.00pm the main event is tea and goodies upstairs or in the garden. Directions are below for new readers. The June 2007 Program is:

June 7:	Laughter Yoga with Sophie Terrace
June 14:	Deep Relaxation and Touching the Earth with Ian & Carolyn
June 21:	Sound Healing with Vivian
June 28:	Qi-Gong and Healing with Carolyn

Directions: Take Queensway to Woodroffe S. exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout to 1252, home of the Pine Gate sangha. No

reindeer grazing the lawn in summer, but new flowerbeds to greet you.

Contacts: Chill@TierneyStauffer.com
iprattis@cyberus.ca 613 726 0881

ANNUAL RETREAT OF PINE GATE SANGHA, 2007 with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis

FRI September 14 – SUN September 16, 2007
At The Barn Retreat Centre, (819) 456 2144
186 Route 366 West, Ste Cecile de Masham,
(Near Wakefield), Quebec.

The retreat program begins on Friday evening with Orientation at 8.00pm. A light supper will be served during registration on Friday, between 6.00pm and 8.00pm. The retreat finishes mid afternoon on Sunday, after lunch, with a sharing circle and a closing ceremony. In between are dharma talks, sutra readings, exercises, walking meditation, and silent time with Mother Earth, as we learn to touch the seeds of that loving and compassionate nature which dwells within each one of us. It is a mostly silent retreat so that we nurture deep compassion. From that energy we can go forward together to reconstruct the world. We begin with ourselves.

Ian will provide gentle, clear instructions and guidance throughout the retreat. There will be meditative silence to help us become more present as we address the root causes of suffering in our world and also identify the conditions that bring about joy.

COST: \$150.00 – Includes lodging, and all meals – gourmet vegetarian!

REGISTRATION: Carolyn Hill; 1252 Rideout Cr., Ottawa, ON, K2C 2X7

726 0881; Chill@TierneyStauffer.com

Please make checks payable to Carolyn Hill, marked Barn Retreat.

BRING: Meditation cushion; sheets, pillowcase & towel; walking shoes; notebook

TENTING: This is an option if you prefer it – a bit chilly though!

FOOD: Catered by our friend Tanya Wodicka, the food is delicious vegetarian.

DIRECTIONS: “The Barn” Retreat Centre is located at the north end of Gatineau Park, 20 minutes from downtown Ottawa. It is charming and comfortable. If you come from Toronto or Montreal on the 417, take the Vanier Parkway Exit and go until Beechwood Ave; LT on Beechwood; RT on King Edward; continue until you cross the McDonald-Cartier bridge. Follow Rte. 5 until the end; RT go 200 meters then LT at traffic light, take Highway 105 N. towards Wakefield; LT on Rte 366 (just past the Wakefield turnoff). Continue on Rte. 336 in the direction of St Cecile de Masham. The Barn is 4.6 km from the 366/105 intersection. Watch for the sign on the LHS to turn into The Barn.

Silence: Noble Silence is observed from the end of the evening meditation until after breakfast the following morning. Noble Silence is the space between sounds that nurtures peace and reflection and enables one to hear the still voice of truth. It encourages the energy of the Mind of Love to become deeply embedded in our daily expressions. This is a precious jewel of practice and guidance will be given on how to implement it.

Working Meditation: Retreatants are placed in family groups that are also dharma discussion groups and working meditation groups: Cardinals, Blue Jays and Hummingbirds.

Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission: On the last morning of the retreat there will be a Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission. These are the ethical and moral bases of mindfulness practice. Application forms will be available at the retreat.

Joseph Campbell and *Failsafe*

Ian Prattis

Failsafe: Gaia, Science and the Buddha – is being made into a documentary film. Two film studios in Florida, who have made award winning documentary films are working on this project. This is an extract from the manuscript.

Joseph Campbell’s groundbreaking work on mythology, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* way back in 1949, contained a highly radical agenda, which was somewhat obscured in his later works. In the Epilogue of the 1968 edition he carefully mapped the reality of the Hero’s quest in modern times. With the insight of impermanence Campbell shows that times have clearly changed, that meaning no longer resides in the community or nature but in the individual. This makes the hero’s quest a radically different and more difficult venture as without the support of community, nature or religion the hero’s quest is to save the planet – not the bounded community or nation - and transform the entire social order of the world. Campbell is adamant that the great religions of the world cannot assist with this task, as they are complicit in the partisan fracturing of the world carried out by factions that curry favour with outmoded expressions of cultural nationalism. Their “monkey holiness” is not the stuff that can aid the hero (1968: 389), who now has a somewhat solitary task because the center of gravity of mythology has changed from nature and locality so that humanity itself is now the mystery to be unravelled.

Yet despite all this, according to Campbell, the hero has the “all” within him, within her. The particular cultural and national characteristics do not tell us anything about what it is to be truly human. And so the task is to step beyond these boundaries, discover through experience that there is no separateness, thus gaining the knowledge and insight that can transform humanity. The influence of the Vedas of Ancient India and their non-dualism is clearly with Campbell in that he feels it is essential for humanity to see the same redemption in different forms – *Truth is one and the Sages call it by many names.*

Thus the propagation of any form such as fundamentalist Islam or fundamentalist Christianity becomes highly dangerous. Campbell is certainly correct about the world's religions that require belief in a God, culturally and nationally defined – “monkey holiness.” Yet the instruments of mindfulness practice in Buddhism with their intent on freeing the human mind from suffering may have some pertinence, as the practices are free of the stigma of cultural nationalism – or should be if the Buddha is listened to carefully! Cultural nationalism is a redundant and obsolete force in the 21st century - that is for the task of transforming the social order of the world. However, the religious right in America and their identical twin – the Taliban in Afghanistan – and other religious groups like them refuse to recognise that they are obsolete, still appealing to the ignorant and fearful. Thus the hero's task in the modern era is ominous and lonely. Campbell (1968: 391) in the last paragraph of his classic states:

The modern hero...cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, of fear, rationalized advice, and sanctified misunderstanding... It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse. And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal – not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair.

And thus *Failsafe* was written as it strikes chords with Joseph Campbell's insights from half a century ago. Its genesis is in line with Campbell's views, though I doubt if he anticipated the present global ecological emergency. This slim volume endeavours to provide understanding, issues a call for the adventure of transmuting the existing world social order by bringing the reader to a deep spiritual understanding of what needs to be done, and finally casts the hero's mantle on all of us. Transforming the fabric of the entire social order asks citizens of the world to do the work of

becoming spiritually responsible rather than remaining spiritual captives. ...*the problem is nothing if not that of rendering the modern world spiritually significant* (Campbell 1968: 388). This is so the revealed knowledge and wisdom gained from this adventure can be applied to society and the environment.

In concert with Joseph Campbell *Failsafe* asks of everyone, including myself, to be a modern hero and heroine for our time.

Understand the challenge

Accept the challenge

Listen to Nietzsche and *Live as though the day were here.*