



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

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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. His wife, Carolyn, 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.

A Different Coalition of the Willing

Ian Prattis

“Friends for Peace” is a coalition of environmental, peace, meditation and social activist groups, who began meeting in Ottawa, January 2003, in response to the impending war in Iraq and to the pervading feeling of helplessness and fear portrayed by the media. The Coalition has since created two annual events, one in early spring called "Peace Song Circle" and the “Peace Prayer Day” held in the fall. We are working to make these events happen in other countries.

The intent is to create a different form of peaceful expression that appeals to a wide cross section of Canadian citizens who support a major role for Canada as a peacekeeping nation. The broader intent, however, is to create a global expression for peace and the planet with communities all over the world gathering each spring and fall to build bridges for non-dualistic action in times of peace and times of war. This coalition recognizes that we must work for peace every day of our lives whether or not it is a time of war. To create infrastructure in our social and political institutions that value and legitimize peace processes is the goal. The root of peace in the world is the individual choosing to act collectively - in coalition with others.

Peace Prayer Day Ottawa took place in October and we are now sitting around our fireplaces, reading the many letters of thanks received, mostly from the United States. The letters speak of a great need for more such messages of hope and celebration of all traditions and paths, and of the longing for

leadership and clear statements about how to begin in your own community.



The Sacred Dance Guild

Thousands of people are mobilizing to talk about peace issues, to meditate together on peace, to find new and creative ways to structure peace into existing institutions, and to question the legitimacy of war. There is a great movement afoot as we breathe in a sense of possibility. A coalition always generates more awareness than the sum of its parts. People are nourished and rejuvenated by the energy of spiritual community. This is our sustenance and constitutes an antidote for alienation, racism, dwelling on the negative and for the endlessness of "living in our heads". What comes to me after my busy mind becomes quiet is that now more than ever we must go deeper into our spiritual processes, become more disciplined in our practices, AND be more active in our social and political structures. The tools are everywhere to be found: meditations to balance the hemispheres of the brain, to develop the skills of deep listening, for grounding and centering, for strengthening the nervous system, for coming to terms with what is truest in our heart.

It is hoped that these events in Ottawa will also lead to the development of a broad network of spiritual leaders committed to transforming our country's current decision making process and to leading with compassion and wisdom. The emergence of a Council of Sages from our present work for peace is to acknowledge that our present leaders rarely have the skills to listen deeply to the suffering within the nation and the world. Friends with training and

discipline in meditation are the ones to listen deeply, to look deeply and examine issues without a partisan flavor. The ability to reflect deeply and touch the core of wisdom and compassion that rests within all is the usefulness of such a council. As they listen, reflect and look deeply, a Council of Sages can present the fruits of these skills to hard pressed politicians, bureaucrats, CEO's and other leaders. In this way there is a basis for transforming how decision-making is effected in our nation. This is what the Council of Sages is all about for us. The alternative for peace can be articulated through such a council and provide a training for leaders who aspire to do the same.

Non-dualistic approaches emphasize that we are in the twenty-first century. Old forms of protest created in the previous century no longer work. The highly ritualized dance of violence between protesters and police is not very intelligent given that non-dualistic forms have the distinct possibility of making allies of the police. Furthermore, this preference welcomes many citizens who choose not to participate in violent protest rallies. The inclusiveness of our efforts is to provide the example from within ourselves for what we hope to see replicated on the national and international stage. Namely: stopping in meditative space; reaching out in non-dualism; followed by wise action based on lucidity and calm.

Non-dualism also perplexes the media who are hoping to find an outbreak of violence to cover, but instead find citizens singing for peace, celebrating peace through prayer, dance and artistry, or standing in silent meditation at peace vigils. These are political protests as they carry a clear consensus of non-confidence in the violent, warlike alternative. Reporters are often inexplicably moved, as they have rarely encountered this kind of news event before. I ask all nations to try this – leave your offices and work place during a designated lunch hour, stand in silent meditation for peace and bring towns, cities and nations to a stop. And ask all political leaders to join you in taking a clear stand for peace. Dualistic protests on the other hand set "us" against "them," and contain the same formula of energy that produces war and

violent conflict. This particular basis for action does not allow for transformation. It only permits cosmetic changes as the same energy is there, fueling both the protester and that which is being protested. True, effective transformation and healing of wounds requires a non-dualistic approach, much patience and being grounded in mindfulness as a life style choice.

Child's Prayer

This following interfaith prayer was written several years ago by a 12 year old child. The dream of this child has been the uniting of people of all faiths worldwide as one voice. This prayer was read in English and Arabic at the Peace Prayer Day by Suzanne Ibrahim, a sangha member originally from Kuwait.

***O God*, Creator of all life and the universe,
guide me and teach me and all nations,
their governments and leaders of the world,
how to make the world a better place,
with justice and peace for all.
A world where no one starves,
a world where everyone has a peaceful
place to live,
a world filled with love, harmony and joy.
Let it be done according to Your Will, O
God!****
I give thanks! I give thanks! I give thanks!

*The word God may be replaced, according to one's own choice (eg. Allah, Absolute, the Infinite Intelligence, Cosmic Wisdom, Supreme Being, Krishna, Brahman, the Tao, the Universal Mind, the Almighty, Alpha/Omega, the Source, the Great Spirit, the Infinite Wisdom, Goddess, the Universe, the One etc.

The Magic of Peace Prayer Day

Bill Grant

Bill Grant had a table at the Peace Prayer Day selling books. But his day, as he found out, was not about commerce.

As a result of attending the Peace Prayer Day as a book vendor, a different kind of peace has broken out in my life. My wife and I have been separated and fighting with lawyers etc. for four years. My son in Cornwall wanted her to come and help out when his wife was having surgery in early October and knowing I was coming to Ottawa that weekend for the Peace Prayer Day - he asked me to bring her. He would return her home on thanksgiving weekend. On the five-hour drive to Ottawa, we were able to discuss a truce and have started to move back together. So while the rain and cold of that day made the Peace Prayer day a financial disaster for me, a much bigger and long lasting thing has happened because of our presence there. I know that my higher power was involved in my finding and attending that day.

I want to thank Shelley and Ian and the rest of you too.

For information on ordering a documentary film of the Peace Prayer Day see page 15.

Musings on Mother Earth

Natalie Zend

Following an earth meditation at the Pine Gate Sangha annual retreat, participants spent several hours in nature. In silence, listening. This is Natalie's experience.

Creation.
Infinite variety.

Carpet of moss gives way to bed of pine needles.
A cricket, bright green, clings to a giant clover,
peers at me as I examine him.
Shimmering sumacs, furry fruit overripe, seedy,
crumble in my hand with a sticky residue.

The birch grove whispers to me:

“Our season comes to a close.

Long night comes and we prepare to rest.”

Maple grove in the distance shushes back:

“Yes, we too begin to feel dozy.”

Tiny flies hover in a cloud around me, surround me,
keep me company as if to say:

“We’re not finished yet.”

This is the Word of God.

Creative Energy Force.

Permeates.

Brings alive.

Even the dead, fallen pine trunk on which I sit is
alive,

populated with moss, lichen, bracket
mushrooms.

Even the deadest filigree shadow of a leaf is alive,
ready for the momentary inhabitation of life,
probably already swimming with a million
invisible creatures.

Being and becoming.

Never-ending flow and cycling.

The same air and water in everything.

The shiver and rustle in the trees

the same breath with which I whisper.

The forest’s song and mine brought
with the same wind.

The trees, birds, flies, crickets all join with me
in the same song,
an ode to the Word,
the sweet self-same Life Force.

As the parabolic elephant trunk, leg, tail and body
are all parts of the same elephant,

The tree stump, the moss, the mushroom, peat and
mulch, little flies and me

are all part of the same one entity.

You touch any part of the elephant, any part of
creation,

you are touching creation.

Infinitely varied elements,

constantly cycling, merging,
of one unified whole.



Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission group
(Natalie is centre front)

Voluntary Simplicity

Ian Prattis

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I wanted to live deep and suck all the marrow of life...”

H.D. Thoreau

Many of us hear or intuit Thoreau’s words, think about them and sigh – if only I could live in the woods, without the distractions and toxins of daily life, then I would know peace. Yet, we can all know peace now if we take refuge in mindfulness practice. This is the challenge – to be in society but as a still island of mindfulness. Small steps at first, then larger ones. The small steps are to realize that most of us cannot drop our present lifestyle cold turkey, but we do not have to be caught in the fast pace of consumer madness. We do not need drastic measures to bring some peace into our lives, just make some essential changes. We can make choices to free up time – be television free for an

evening, take more walks, enjoy quiet meals with friends in mindfulness, write in a journal, meditate and sort out the clutter of the mind. We do not have to live in the wilderness to “suck all the marrow of life” – all that is required is to have a mindful approach to everyday living. Voluntary Simplicity is a good starting place. It means amongst other things being more aware of our consumerism, making deliberate choices about how we spend time and money rather than living on the automatic pilot of busyness. Supporting charities with the excess clutter in the basement that we never use, always thinking about whether we really need to “buy.” Enjoy being simple, living true by shifting our perceptions just a little bit. Not a big deal, really. Simplifying life makes life suddenly available in much bigger compass. Let us all try a New Year resolution of Voluntary Simplicity - look deeply into what we do with time, money, clutter and our choices. Then see whether the consequences are peace and happiness.

Sangha

Danna Faulds

Teach me what I cannot learn alone.
Let us share what we know, and what
we cannot fathom. Speak to me of
mysteries, and let us never lie
to one another.

May our fierce and tender longing
fuel the fire in our souls. When we
stand side by side, let us dare to focus
our desire on the truth. May we be
reminders, each for the other, that
the path of transformation passes
through the flames.

To take one step is courageous;
to stay on the path day after day,
choosing the unknown, and facing
yet another fear, that is nothing
short of grace.

Kitchen Counters

Ann Fleming

The following are the thoughts that arose from watching Thich Nhat Hanh's video presentations on December 4th and 11th, 2003 to the sangha where he discussed the four Right Efforts and the nature of our consciousness. Thay's talk was given during the summer retreat in Plum Village in 2001.

The practice - is a decision I make to live my own life mindfully.

My store consciousness contains all seeds - negative and positive - such as anger, jealousy, fear, joy, generosity, and compassion. What manifests in my mind is what I allow to manifest - either from genetics (gifts from my ancestors) or stimulation (from the environment/society/culture) or passivity (what arises out of my own non-attention or non-mindfulness). All seeds remain, waiting, in my store-consciousness forever. Regular, daily practice of mindfulness is necessary to encourage positive seeds to manifest. In spite of my best efforts and most diligent behaviour, the possibility remains that in a moment of non-attention, a negative seed will take root.

Just as the kitchen counter seems to 'grow' dirty dishes in spite of my on-going effort to keep it clear, so my mind builds up with the negative toxins that accumulate each day from the life encounters and life-habits that I allow to direct me in moments of un-mindfulness. I also realize that the task of cleaning up both a cluttered counter and a toxin-loaded mind can always be made lighter by enlisting help. I can always request of a compassionate family member, friend or co-worker that they let me know when I need to slow down and take care of myself. Others who care about me are usually able to see the negative habit behaviours I manifest, that in my un-mindful moments I choose not to see rise in myself.

In my decision to live my life mindfully, I can recognize the toxic seed sprouting in my mind, just as I take note of the spill on the counter that needs wiping up, or the soaking pot left in the sink. Sometimes I cannot spare time right now to do a

clean-up, but I can always take the time to recognize that a clean-up is required and to set time aside later. Sometimes even embracing the need for that 'later' is enough to prevent the negative seed of frustration/anger from taking a firm hold. Identifying the toxic seed often de-personalizes the toxic situation enough that I can look on it with compassion, just as I recognize that I can stack dirty dishes in the sink rather than leave them all over the counter if I'm in a hurry to meet an unavoidable deadline. The real clean-up can happen later, when I have time to fully attend to it with mindfulness.

The practice: - the cultivation of mindfulness as an Organic process.

Thay offered the example of composting all the experiences of my life rather than discarding any of them so that the soil of my store consciousness will be enriched, encouraging positive seeds to grow bigger. In the discussion that followed the presentation, Keith provided the trigger for this reflection with his observation that no composting happens in the Canadian winter - there is no heat!

The heat required for composting life's experiences is emotion.

When my life experiences offer me strong emotions such as anger, fear, shame, or anxiety, or the physical discomfort of fatigue or pain, I can recognize that something is there awaiting transformation. I need to be willing to welcome every one of those uncomfortable life ingredients into the simmering cauldron of my daily experience rather than willfully or apathetically neglecting them as they arise and then dumping them in the garbage!. When, like a well-functioning robot, I am so unconscious and busy that my life's partners and activities are simply to be endured, there is no joy. And when joy is absent, other seeds take root. When physical or mental fatigue sets in, I may be unable to sustain my practice. I must not discriminate between those emotions that produce discomfort and those that produce satisfaction. I must throw them all in. The richer the base the more lush the garden. All organic matter can be composted. The salad greens as well as the weeds!

All compost heaps sleep over the winter. The bacteria need the heat of the sun to reactivate. But if I dump in a bushel of cornhusks or grass clippings, the composter will be overloaded with too much at once and the process slows to a halt. If I wait to practice mindfulness only when I am aware of discomfort, I may be overwhelmed. Through the experience of all my relationships and every daily activity the material of my life is presented for cultivation or composting. When I am mindful of it's arising, and willing to look on it with compassion, pleasant emotion can flower profusely and strong emotion can be transformed to enrich the soil of my mind.

Order of Interbeing

Matthew Huston and Cheryl Barnes-Neff

There are three aspirant groups mentoring with Ian for membership in Thay's Order of Interbeing. Three members of Pine Gate sangha, three also from the Fish Lake sangha in Orlando, Florida and five Wild Geese from the Scottish sangha are presently engaged in the training process. The first exercise invites aspirants to learn to sing the Incense Offering and rewrite the first two mindfulness trainings in light of their own experience and reflections. Members of the Florida aspirant group sent in the following report.

Sharing our insights of the first two of the Fourteen Mindfulness Training was a great experience. Cheryl and I sat down on our lunch break while at work – we both work at a hospice in Central Florida called Vitas – so that we could discuss our rewrites. Cheryl's rewrites were done very well. She does not share personal things about her past very easily, but her practice has really opened up her ability to be free about her childhood and events of her life. When she wrote about being neglected as a child, I felt deep compassion for her, being pushed to grow up and be independent almost all on her own. That she has seen this in herself and worked to transform those things into a positive is a great personal growth. I tried to present both things I had experienced within myself and things I had observed around me as well. I think that the

compassion that comes from our own realizations then becomes a stronger version for those around us. I know that no one suffers the same way, but the transformation of it can be similar. Now, through my practice I can recognize both the times I've suffered, and the times I've also been part of causing suffering in others as well. I also got this message from Cheryl's writings as well.

Strangely enough (or maybe not so much), we both used our work as an example. Both of us have seen anger, and other hurt feelings come out of clinging to points of view. It is amazing how these things can simply go by us, until we are given something that is like a finger pointing to these disagreements and hurtfulness that opens our eyes to how often it happens and the effects it has on everyone.

Matthew Huston

Wonderful Commitment of the Heart

First of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings

Realizing that deeply held beliefs cause suffering in ourselves and others, we practice in order to be free from dogmas, philosophies, views, and ideas. Being attached to these things leads to conflict. Freeing ourselves of all views can put an end to conflicts and transform them into deep, meaningful understanding. While I was raised Catholic, I never found that the religion spoke to me in the ways that others claimed it did for them. So I never truly became involved in the experience of being a Catholic. I had not become attached to their dogma. Even later when I adopted a Deist look at the world, I did not become die hard in my view. I have always been taken aback when people begin to define themselves by a situation, a way of living, a dogma, or idea of themselves. When people narrowly define themselves, I see the first mindfulness training.

It doesn't always have to be that consuming, holding into a belief, to be sure. I have experienced personally how holding onto a belief especially of oneself - can cause us to suffer. I know how to write HTML code that creates web pages. I am knowledgeable of the building and design of sites, and even made money doing it, so I had considered

myself excellent at web design. Sometimes when a page would not come out right, however, I would get frustrated and immediately start to blame the programs I used, or the web browser. If I had been able to release the view that when I wrote the code I could do no wrong, I would have saved myself a lot of teeth grinding and fist slamming. This isn't a ground shaking, world-changing example, but it doesn't really need to be. Through practice I was eventually able to shed those beliefs (as well as others) to enable me to be more peaceful, and mindful when I worked.

Second of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings

Realizing that clinging to narrow views and perceptions cause suffering to arise in ourselves and others, we practice in order to free ourselves of them. When we are able to look and listen deeply to those around us without comparing them to our own notions, and put an end to any discrimination of ideas and the ignorance of closing our hearts and minds, it will leave us open to grow in our path.

When I read the second of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, I was reminded of an experience I had during college while taking anthropology. In the class we learned the definition of "culture" was the total of a people, their traditions, their needs, how they were filled, their religious practices and celebrations, clothing, politics, etc. In essence, their culture was all the coming together of non-culture elements. One day before class, I became involved in a discussion with a classmate over this very thing. She had gone to work somewhere in South America and was struck by the poverty level of the little town she was sent to. The experiences such as seeing children beg, and small meals had convinced her that their poverty (relative to the USA) then defined their entire culture. Being new to the practice then, I jumped in to prove she was wrong. I tried to remind her of how the professor had explained what a "culture" was. She held onto her view and our discussion became an argument. After practicing now, I can look back and see what a useless situation it was. We were both attached to our side of the argument. I also felt the need to correct her, no matter how

long it took. I participated in both of us becoming frustrated and a little angry. If I had let go and ceased the discussion there would have been less suffering and I would not have helped it arise in someone else.

Cheryl Barnes-Neff
Compassionate Opening of the Heart

The First Mindfulness Training

"The map is not the territory."

There are many tools that we can use to help us understand, but like a map that we use to help us find a specific destination, we cannot cling to the map itself. When we decide that one map, or method, is the only way, we focus on the map and not the wisdom that the map can lead us to.

I vow to be open-minded and discerning on my path, keeping the beacons of compassion, clarity, and Nirvana as my guiding light. I will strive to recognize the truth, wrapped as it is in so many different fabrics, textures, and colours. I will strive to be open to listen to the methods that other people have found to discover new layers, nuances, and points-of-view, opening the dharma to its full richness. Because I was neglected as a child, I have struggled with the balance between having direction and being open to the unknown. Ideally, a child needs both the loving guidance of her parents and the freedom to explore and become her own person. A neglected child is literally lost in the openness – a map that leads to a dead end - recognizes that as danger, and longs for the safety that structure provides. I did learn to be self-reliant because of my experience of being on my own even as a pre-schooler, seeing early on that the structure of home that was visible to the rest of the world didn't exist in my reality. That search for safety has led to periods of time for me that I created a framework that was "right" and clinging to it fiercely; yet because of the lack of structure, I can see and am very open to seeing other sides of issues and often explore (sometimes over-explore) those sides before making decisions. When I found Buddhism, I discovered that I needed to dig hard into the reasons

beneath my "rightness", to discover that the safety I sought was found not in clinging to a dogma, but in looking deeply into myself. That balance of being open and still keeping my eyes on the "North Star" is one that I return to often.

The Second Mindfulness Training:

"Within mindfulness, there are more possibilities than we can imagine."

When we believe that our options are limited, it is a clue that we are not being mindful and open to the world. When we have a beginner's mind, we can approach each moment with freshness. We then have the opportunity to learn and see the bigger picture. I vow to avoid jumping to conclusions or formulating my opinion before fully observing and listening to the situation and people involved. I will strive to lessen my attachment to my intellect, learned knowledge, and wanting to be right; striving instead to be open for the wisdom to allow the truth in life to reveal itself.

In my work as a facilitator for quality improvement groups, I have seen first hand, the amazing results when people use their creativity and talents to solve problems, find ways to improve care to our patients, and work as a team. They show me the essence of this precept each day.

Voice from Ottawa

Marvin Schwartz

Marvin is a member of the Ottawa aspirant group training for entry to the Tiep Hien – Order of Interbeing. Here are his reflections on the first two trainings.

The First Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, we are determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist teachings are guiding means to help us learn to look deeply and to develop our understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill, or die for.

The Second Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing Aware of the suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, we are determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. We shall learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to others' insights and experiences. We are aware that the knowledge we presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life, and we will observe life within and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives.

When I begin my yoga classes I tell everyone that the first rule is ahimsa, non-harming. To practice this we have to learn the difference between a good stretch which works out the soreness and stiffness in the muscles and jerky stretches that move too fast and cause pain and injury. I also tell everyone to try to practice with their eyes closed. With your eyes closed you cannot see what another person is doing so you don't compete with them. While these instructions help, they still leave us to deal with ourselves. I note that I compete with myself – can I get a little extra stretch; that's not pain I am feeling, it's just soreness when it's really pain. We can do injury to ourselves even when there is nobody else around.

So as I read and reread the mindfulness trainings to determine how I can put them into practice, I note that they are numbered as ordinals, i.e. the first, second etc. I begin to question whether there is a reason for the ordering of the trainings. My understanding of the first two trainings is that they do not only tell us about the dangers of fanaticism and intolerance and narrow-mindedness and attachment. The first two mindfulness trainings are guidelines for how we relate to the other trainings as well as guidelines for how we put into action the first two trainings. The guideline is to develop our compassion and understanding. Compassion and understanding are akin to stretching the muscles in yoga, if we become fanatic about it we can become jerky and stretch too fast and cause pain. I noticed this most with my close relationships. It is characterized by my using the terms 'should' and 'have to'. These words are sure signs that I have become fanatical. However, recently my daughter who is twenty five years old needed my support. In

giving the support I had to tell her what she 'should do' for her protection. This episode made me aware that compassion sometimes requires us to dictate to someone what they ought to do and not be fanatical about not being fanatical.

As someone who works with knowledge and is required to make judgements based on that knowledge, the final words of the second mindfulness training resonate: 'We are aware that the knowledge we presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life, and we will observe life within and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives.' From these words I realized that attachment, like fanaticism, is an indicator of our being caught in a particular state of being. Sometimes my fanatical attachment to what I know causes me problems. When I am attached to knowing something I feel pride. When I know something that impresses others, I feel the pride of being better than someone else and I suffer from a lack of humility. I can actually see my mind photographing the proud moment. When someone else does something that I feel that I can do, I feel the pride of being just as good as that person and my mind spins off into times when I have accomplished something just as good. When I do something that causes other people or me pain, I feel the pride of not being as good as others. My mind begins to rationalize how I didn't really mess up, somebody else did. So I learn that I am attached to what I know or don't know and neither state feels good.

By mindfully looking at the second mindfulness training, I came to the above understandings. But I also came to the realization that those understandings are ephemeral, of the moment. Further, they have been affected by the comments that others have already written. I realize that if I had been able to be with the sangha, I would have heard what others said and my attachment to what I have written would have become apparent to me and my truth would change. Others truths would also change and by looking deeply at this or any mindfulness training we would continuously be changing how we understand the training.

In Deed You Are Love

Steven Welchner

Think loving thoughts
Thought is the beginning of creation

Say loving words
Words travel far and deep

Do loving deeds
In deed you are love experienced

Love is your highest choice
Your true Self

It is our common inheritance
For all to share

How Can You Stand Being A Nurse?

Cheryl Barnes-Neff

Cheryl is an OI aspirant from Florida and submitted this prose poem as a reflection on the Fourth Mindfulness Training of the Order of Interbeing about the Awareness of Suffering. She is a nurse. This was written by Mary B. Mallison RN and Cheryl keeps it close as an inspiration.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear the sight of blood?

Wait until you slide a catheter into a tiny vein just before it collapses. The flashback of blood you see will make you sing.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear the sight, the embarrassment, of urine?

Wait until your new postpartum patient can't void, and her uterus is rising. Your persistent maneuvers finally work, making a catheter unnecessary. Urine then looks glorious.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear to touch that alcoholic who hasn't had a bath in weeks?

Wait until you've repeatedly given ice lavages to that alcoholic and his esophageal varices have finally stopped bleeding. When he actually recovers

enough to amble onto your unit to visit, dirt and all, you'll be happy enough to hug him.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear to watch someone die?

Wait until you've worked for weeks helping a dying woman repair a decades-old conflict with her children, and at some point along the way you see the guilt fall from their shoulders and peace enter her eyes. Watching such a death can be an exaltation.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear the sight and smell of feces?

Wait until you've been anxious about the diarrhea that nothing has stopped in an AIDS patient. Finally, your strategies work and you see and smell normal stool. You'll welcome that smell.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear to watch children suffer?

Wait until you've rocked and soothed a suffering child into peaceful sleep, and you feel the child's relief washing over you like a blessing. Then you won't need to ask.

How can, you be a nurse? How can you bear to look at searing trauma, at burned people?

Wait until you see healthy granulation tissue that has been given a chance because your sensitive nose detected an infection before it could take hold. That healing will look beautiful to you.

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear the stream of abusive words heaped on you by psychotic patients?

Wait until you've prodded and pulled a silent, withdrawn catatonic back over the lifeline, and she releases a string of expletives. Could Mozart sound better?

How can you be a nurse? How can, you bear the sound of babies crying?

Wait until your combination of vigilance, bulldog advocacy, and gentle handling has given a preemie's lungs the time they needed to develop, and you hear his first lusty cry. You'll laugh out loud!

How can you be a nurse? How can you bear to care for frustrating, confused Alzheimer's patients?

Wait until you've devised a combination of strategies that provide exercise and permit safe wandering, and you see a lift, almost a spring, in a patient's shuffling gait. You'll feel the lightness of Baryshnikov in your own step that day.

How can you be a nurse? So many of your patients are so old, so sick, these days. How can you bear the thought that, in the end, your care may make no difference?

Wait until you've used your hands and eyes and voice to dispel terror, to show a helpless person that his life is respected, that he has dignity. Your caring helps him care about himself. His helplessness forces you to think about the brevity of your own life. Then and there, you decide yet again to reject the pallid pastel life. No tepid sail across a protected cove for you. No easy answers. So you keep choosing to be a nurse. You have days of frustration, nights of despair, terrible angers. Your highs and lows are peaks and chasms, not hills and valleys. The defeats come more than often enough to keep you humble: the problems you can't untangle, the lives that seep away too fast, the meanings that elude your understanding. But you keep working at it, learning from it, knowing the next peak lies ahead. And gradually you realize your palette is filling up with colors. You see more shades of meaning. You laugh more. You realize you are well on your way to creating a work of art, maybe even a masterpiece. So that's why you've remained a nurse. To your surprise, your greatest work of art is turning out to be your own life.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Awareness of Suffering

Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help us develop compassion and find ways out of suffering, we are determined not to avoid or close our eyes before suffering. We are committed to finding ways, including personal contact, images, and sounds, to be with those who suffer, so we can understand their situation deeply

and help them transform their suffering into compassion, peace, and joy.

Meditation For Peace On Earth

This meditation was posted on the Internet as an invitation to create a global response for peace on earth. All over the world groups coordinated the timing of their meditation to coincide with a special liturgy conducted at the United Nations in New York at 6.30 pm EST on Thursday March 23, 1998. James Twyman sang peace prayers from twelve major religions, and was joined by countless millions to share a vision of a world transformed by love. Several months earlier James had performed peace concerts in Iraq and Northern Ireland to bring the energy of peace and love to these volatile trigger points for the expansion of war and fear.

When we focus our beings and minds on inner and world peace, we change our perceptions, thereby the world. We first have to still our own fears and take inner steps to calm ourselves and be clear. This is what meditation is for – to return ourselves to a place of inner freedom, to a place of the heart and from there we can be clear about our responses to world situations. In this manner we can create a world based on love rather than fear. Our sadness, angers and fears all have a similar cause. It is that we have become separated from our true nature, which is to be peace, to be love, just as it is our natural expression to be responsible and compassionate leaders. We are very powerful indeed, once we return to our true selves and step through the layers of suffering and conditioning that beset us all in different ways. This is why daily meditation is so important, both for ourselves and the world we live in, for meditation brings the opportunity to come to rest in the heart, and to transform our suffering and the suffering of others.

On the morning of March 23, 1998 one of my meditation students brought the Internet invitation to my attention and invited me to do the meditation with her co-workers at a cappuccino café in Kemptville, a small town 50 miles south of Ottawa. It was a very moving experience, especially the feeling of interconnectedness and the very real sense that our energy made a difference. In my

travels throughout Canada and the United States afterwards, I discovered that the same Internet meditation was conducted by countless small groups of very different persuasions and backgrounds all across North America. This combination of electronic and heart communication was astonishing, as is the power of this simple liturgy for peace on earth. The liturgy can be done at any time. You do not have to wait for a co-ordinated Internet invitation. You can be a self-appointed co-ordinator for the network of people you presently connect to. With friends you can reinforce and recreate the March 23 1998 liturgy.

Opening: Sit quietly for meditation. Breathe in and out very gently, through the heart center and fill your body with light from the heart. Do this for ten breaths, then begin with this affirmation, said with great power and conviction:

I am a Being of Light.

**I extend this Light to all beings, in
compassion and love,**

knowing that they are one within me.

This moment the world is healed

And I along with it.

I will it and it is so.

Middle: Chant the universal sound OM (A-U-M) for 5 minutes, or sing the hymn “Amazing Grace”, or a song that can carry the spiritual energy and vibration of the affirmation. This can be done through a single tone or through a chant or song. Then remain silent for 5 minutes, just breathing in and out with awareness, as you allow your own spirit to receive the light and love which you yourself extended to the world.

Closing: End with this prayer for peace, say it out loud:

It is done!

I am one with all and all is healed

I accept this for myself and for the world.

I am a Being of Light now and always.

Amen.

Then with great reverence, bow your head and give thanks to universal consciousness for this grand opportunity. The universe gives thanks to you for being part of this great experiment.

Peace Prayer Day Speech

Ian Prattis

“I want to talk to you about our children and the kind of future we are creating for them. Do we teach them peace? Or through neglect do we allow violence to flood their minds, hearts and consciousness so they learn war? Even worse, do they live out our own personal wars expressed through our violent attitudes, speech and actions towards them? I ask every adult here, particularly men, and in our country to deal with their internal wars so that only the best in us is passed on to our children, not the worst in terms of violence.

As a noble contrast, we experience peace together at this Peace Prayer Day at Alumni Park, Carleton University in the City of Ottawa. We come together to celebrate peace – First Nations, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, Sufis and Hindus. Peace, environmental, social activist and meditation groups from all traditions. All walks of life, all colors, all ages. Our determination to be peace and courage to stand for it, no matter what, creates the energy and power for change. The pouring rain has not deterred us as we provide a beginning anew for our city. It represents the tears of the world that we can take care of by being resolute examples of peace. We are bridges across the boundaries that separate, a microcosm of the world in harmony and at peace. This is all very wonderful, but how does it translate into action?

The first step is already clear – we must deal with our internal wars, hatreds and fears. How do we do this? We stop running and hiding behind addictions and busyness. We stop, look deeply into the eyes of our children and make a commitment to face our internal demons and transform them by stepping on to the path of compassion, whatever the tradition.

Not by transmitting our wars to the children of the world. We need community for this, to support us in sacred ceremony, meditation and creative spirituality so that we raise our consciousness and refine our speech, attitudes and actions. We show our children the way to peace by learning to be it. By our example we send a very strong message of encouragement to our children.

Let us be clear about the world we have created for our children. Since 9/11 the level of hate and violence globally has increased dramatically. America has used excessive violence to suppress violence. This is not the correct way to proceed and America must wake up to this. During the Vietnam war the US search and destroy campaign succeeded only in creating more communists, with the resulting reality that the present regime in Vietnam is a communist one. In Afghanistan and Iraq, US military force has succeeded in creating more terrorists. The shock and awe campaign of bombing Iraq has repercussions that reach right back into the heart of America. There is no “them” and “us”. We either learn to live peacefully together or we all suffer and die together.

All violence is injustice and we have to teach our children the truth about war. Not about winners and losers, but about the long term suffering on both sides. A desperate statistic, however, is that America goes to war every 18 months, supported by a misguided American public believing in a false sense of patriotism. The truth is that America has yet to recover from the wounds of the Korean War, and certainly not from the suffering of the Vietnam War. To hide the fear and insecurity that runs through America, the industrial-military-imperialist complex of America rushes to war. This must stop and it is only citizens of the world standing together for peace and saying “No to War” that will stop it.

But the hatred grows and the suffering increases. What can we do as individuals to change this? First of all we must uproot the violence and war within ourselves. To prevent war we nurture non-violence. We practice meditation and prayer in daily life to transform the poisons within ourselves and within our nation. Doing this in our family, in our community produces positive feedback loops

throughout our society and government – which is ultimately accountable to each one of us. We just have to make it so.

We enter into true peace negotiations by learning the methods of deep listening, respectful and non-violent communication, understanding and bringing our selfish agendas to a stop. The art of deep listening enables us to listen to the suffering within our nation, then to the suffering within nations we are in conflict with. In this way we create bridges of understanding across the cultural and religious boundaries that separate. We create peace by knowing that compassion is the antidote to violence and hatred. This is the remedy for our troubled times. Compassion, however, has to be generated in our heart by first of all taking care of our internal wars and violence. Then we are able to touch the depth of compassion, strength and clarity within us and take wise action. These actions are taken to the political and economic infrastructures that surround and often oppress us. It also means letting go of our ego, of our individual agendas and finding the middle way to represent the collective, thereby becoming an Ambassador for Peace.

We must also make peace with Mother Earth. If we injure Mother Earth, we injure ourselves. Our civilization has caused such deep harm to the earth that we humans may soon become an endangered species, so we must change our ways. George Bush and Tony Blair have been looking for Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. They ignore their civilizations’ creation of the biggest weapon of mass destruction – Global Warming. This has been created by our collective greed, produced by our industrial processes and consumerist madness. The result is damage to Mother Earth. This summer’s unprecedented heat wave in Europe killed 10,000 people in France, 6,000 in Italy. 3,000 died in the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. I do not diminish that tragedy but point out that the rising sea levels produced by Global Warming will kill millions, displacing millions more. This weapon of mass destruction is far more dangerous than terrorism. It has the capacity to destabilize existing political and economic structures, which are totally out of synch with the earth’s natural capital, which shrinks daily

from the mindless environmental stupidity of our entire industrial civilization. What could the 200 billion dollars recently spent on war have done to alleviate Global Warming? I leave the listener to assess the priorities here – it does not require anyone to be a rocket scientist to realize that military threats to our security and well being are totally eclipsed by environmental collapse. We must change our ways and make peace with Mother Earth otherwise we will not survive. Our collective greed, mindless consumerism, industrial pollution and government irresponsibility must change. We must also rescue the UN from the devastating effects caused by US and UK indifference towards the one world body capable of making a difference. Our Peace Prayer Day is squarely in support of UN peace processes and not in support of the violent excesses of the US.

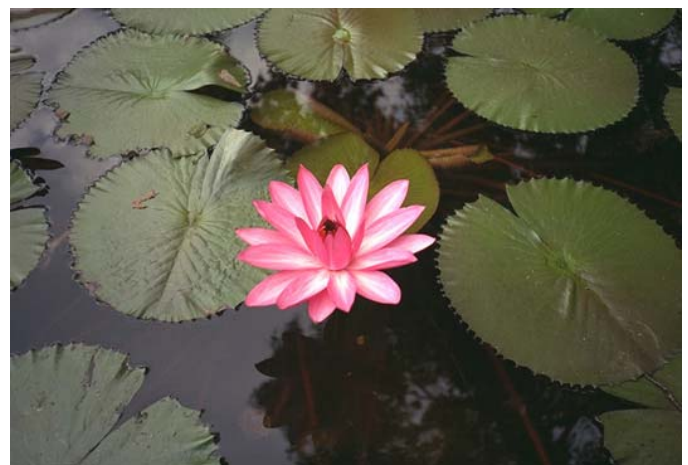
As an Ambassador of Peace we champion the cause of Mother Earth, the cause of non-violent relationships in political and global affairs. This means our leaders have to be trained in the art of deep listening and stopping before contemplating violent action. We must make it clear to our political and corporate leaders that business as usual is not an option. That the violence they commit in our name is no longer acceptable. Our political leaders are ultimately accountable to us. We elect them and can therefore influence them. As an Ambassador of Peace we speak out to corporate and political leaders – but not as individuals but as representatives of groups, coalitions and nations. We do not neglect the political and economic infrastructures that frame our lives. We hold them to account and influence them with our clarity, wisdom and courage. We consume carefully, rejecting the mindlessness of an uncaring consumer society. As we go deeper spiritually, we can take care of our internal wars as we realize that everything interconnects. We act as Ambassadors for Peace and make it safe for children not yet born for seven generations into the future. This is a teaching from Native American wisdom. The actions we take now are shaping the possibilities for future generations.

So here is our challenge. Today, October 4, 2003, in the pouring rain and thunderstorms at Alumni

Park, Carleton University in the City of Ottawa – we have experienced peace, a deep peace shared between many traditions, cultures and religions. As such we represent the diversity of the world – an example of what can be. This experience, however, evaporates into nothing if we do not translate it into action. Begin the work on yourselves today, so that your attitudes, speech and actions become an example to your children, friends and communities. Take the practical steps to make peace with Mother Earth in terms of what you consume and support. Then represent your community, in coalition with other communities, to political and corporate leaders so they know the general public means business. But if we want them to change their ways – we first of all have to change our ways. Show clearly that we are choosing peace and harmony within ourselves, within our communities and with Mother Earth. Today's experience asks that of us. Together we can do it. We are supported and can overcome.

We are Ambassadors of Peace after all.”

October 4, 2003



Film Documentary of Peace Prayer Day

To order the film, please contact Kevin Burton at
 kburton@cyberus.ca, 613-233-9855.

14 Central Ave, Ottawa, ON, K2P 0M9, Canada.

VHS \$20.00 \$7.00 P & P Total: \$27.00

DVD \$25.00 \$5.00 P & P Total: \$30.00



(All funds in Canadian Dollars)

Peace Prayer Day Ottawa opened with Native American drummers and dancers from Maniwaki, with children in full costume leading the entire audience through a circle dance. Massed choirs, the Sacred Dance Guild, Buddhist, Sikh, Christian, Sufi, Israeli and Arabic expressions for peace and planetary care supported the children's prayers for change and hope, as did the activist speeches from the heart. This celebration of peace and call for change appealed to many who feel drawn to be peace but who have never before taken part in its group expressions.

On the day of this outdoor event, the elements and nature were responsive in many ways. Two eagles circled above us, the thunder gods threatened, yet the persistent rain let up at the end and allowed the sun to shine forth just as we started to sing together. A marvelous documentary film is now available, which you can order. It shows the courage and

determination shining through to be nothing other than peace and to make a difference to our world.

For more about us please check out:

<http://www.ianprattis.com/friends/friendsforpeace.htm>

Do support our work through buying this wonderful film documentary.

Dharma Pet

Lady, the sangha's dharma cat has passed on. She



had a tumor on her tongue that was inoperable and could no longer eat so she was put to sleep on December 17, 2003. She will be missed by the whole sangha as she had the uncanny knack to always find the person who most needed some unconditional love and nestle quietly in that person's lap. On some sangha nights she was very busy! As a stray she walked in to Ian's home in the middle of Gatineau National Park and claimed ownership. That was ten years ago and since then she has delivered her gentle love to all comers to the Pine Gate Meditation Hall. Her special nature lives on in all who met and enjoyed her presence.

Pine Gate Schedule Jan – Mar 2004	
SATURDAY Jan 10 10.00am – 4.00pm	Day of Mindfulness Pine Gate Meditation Hall
Thursday Jan 15 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Five Touchings of the Earth
Thursday Jan 22 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Levels of Meditative Experience 1 Dharma Talk by Dharmacharya Ian Prattis
Thursday Jan 29 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Levels of Meditative Experience 2 Dharma Talk by Dharmacharya Ian Prattis
Thursday Feb 5 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Relationships/ Family Practice
SATURDAY Feb 7 5.00pm – 7.00pm	“Regret to Inform” – Ultimate anti war film Pot luck supper, Pine Gate Meditation Hall
Thursday Feb 12 7.00pm – 9.00pm	The Six Paramitas 1 Thich Nhat Hanh – June 12, 1998 Video
Thursday Feb 19 7.00pm – 9.00pm	The Six Paramitas 2 Thich Nhat Hanh – June 12, 1998 Video
Thursday Feb 26 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation
Thursday March 4 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Guest Presentation
SATURDAY March 6 5.00pm – 7.00pm	Dharma Talk: Small God Limited Dharma Syndrome Pot luck supper, Pine Gate Meditation Hall
Thursday March 11 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh in Scotland, 2003 Audio DVD
Thursday March 18 7.00pm – 9.00pm	True Transmission 1 Thich Nhat Hanh Dharma Talk – Video
Thursday March 25 7.00pm – 9.00pm	True Transmission 2 Thich Nhat Hanh Dharma Talk - Video

DIRECTIONS TO PINE GATE MEDITATION HALL

Take Queensway to Woodroffe South exit; Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on Rideout and follow the crescent round to 1252 – reindeer on the lawn, Christmas tree on the porch.

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