

On Sat, Jan 29, 2011 at 1:11 PM, Lily <lilyg@videotron.ca> wrote:

If I suffer how can I be of help? (Dalaï Lama)

Thay surrounded by children: Happy

Awake

Alive

Zombie

Daily practice

Sit and do nothing

Nike: just do it!

Stop, breathe, smile and be happy

What is happiness?

Vivre dans le monde sans avoir l'esprit dérangé par le monde

Peace and Joy (vietnamien)

How can you be happy and not in peace?

In peace and not in joy?

The miracle of walking on this earth

If you do not know how to walk, you cannot say you are in Plum Village, you cannot say you are my students.

I am practicing according TNH's teachings

The door opening

The stairs

The practice is not to get the rice cooked but to practice while it is cooking

In touch with his love

When you see the result, you gain so much confidence and faith

Thay's walking is real, not fake.

The era of mindful eating

Grazing

The Five Contemplations

Savor

Beginning anew

The people who we loves the most are the ones who can make us suffer the most

Peace treaty

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PRACTICE - Beginning Anew

To begin anew is to look deeply and honestly at ourselves, our past actions, speech and thoughts and to create a fresh beginning within ourselves and in our relationships with others. At the practice center we practice Beginning Anew as a community every two weeks and individually as often as we like.

We practice Beginning Anew to clear our mind and keep our practice fresh. When a difficulty arises in our relationships with fellow practitioners and one of us feels resentment or hurt, we know it is time to Begin Anew. The following is a description of the four-part process of Beginning Anew as used in a formal setting. One person speaks at a time and is not interrupted during his or her turn. The other practitioners practice deep listening and following their breath.

- 1. Flower watering - This is a chance to share our appreciation for the other person. We may mention specific instances that the other person said or did something that we had admired. This is an opportunity to shine light on the other's strengths and contributions to the sangha and to encourage the growth of his or her positive qualities.*
- 2. Sharing regrets - We may mention any unskillfulness in our actions, speech or thoughts that we have not yet had an opportunity to apologize for.*
- 3. Expressing a hurt - We may share how we felt hurt by an interaction with another practitioner, due to his or her actions, speech or thoughts. (To express a hurt we should first water the other person's flower by sharing two positive qualities that we have truly observed in him or her. Expressing a hurt is often performed one on one with another practitioner rather than in the group setting. You may ask for a third party that you both trust and respect to be present, if desired.)*
- 4. Sharing a long-term difficulty & asking for support- At times we each have difficulties and pain arise from our past that surface in the present. When we share an issue that we are dealing with we can let the people around us understand us better and offer the support that we really need.*

The practice of Beginning Anew helps us develop our kind speech and compassionate listening. Begin Anew is a practice of recognition and appreciation of the positive elements within our Sangha. For instance, we may notice that our roommate is generous in sharing her insights, and another friend is caring towards plants.

Recognizing others positive traits allows us to see our own good qualities as well. Along with these good traits, we each have areas of weakness, such as talking out of our anger or being caught in our misperceptions. When we practice "flower watering" we support the development of good qualities in each other and at the same time we help to weaken the difficulties in the other person. As in a garden, when we "water the flowers" of loving kindness and compassion in each other, we also take energy away from the weeds of anger, jealousy and misperception.

We can practice Beginning Anew everyday by expressing our appreciation for our fellow practitioners and apologizing right away when we do or say something that hurts them. We can politely let others know when we have been hurt as well. The health and

happiness of the whole community depends on the harmony, peace and joy that exists between every member in the Sangha.

PRACTICE: PEACE TREATY AND PEACE NOTE

Suppose someone we care about says something unkind to us, and we feel hurt. If we reply right away, we risk making the situation worse. Another option is to breathe in and out to calm ourselves, and when we are calm enough, say, "Dear, what you just said hurt me. I would like to look deeply into it, and I would like you to look deeply into it, also. Then we can make an appointment for some time later in the week to look at it together." One person looking at the roots of our suffering is good; two people looking together is even better.

We may be at war with ourselves inside, hurting our bodies with drugs or alcohol. Now we have the opportunity to sign a treaty with our bodies, our feelings, and our emotions. Once we make a peace treaty with them, we can have some peace, and we begin to reconcile with our beloved. If there is a war inside us, it is very easy to start a war with our beloved, not to mention with our enemies. If our beloved is our enemy, how can we hope to have peace in this country and in the world?

We all have the seed of wisdom in us. We know that punishing leads us nowhere, and yet we are always trying to punish someone. When our beloved says or does something that makes us suffer, we want to punish them, because we believe that by punishing them we will get some relief. There are times when we are lucid and we know that this is childish and ignorant. When we make our beloved ones suffer, they may also try to get some relief by punishing us in turn, resulting in an escalation of punishment.

The treaty suggests Friday as the night for discussion, though you can pick any night. You make an appointment for Friday because if you are still hurt, it may be too risky to begin discussing it now. You might say things that will make the situation worse. Until Friday evening, you can practice looking deeply into the nature of your suffering, and the other person can too. Before Friday night, one or both of you may see the root of the problem and be able to come to the other and apologize. Then on Friday night, you can simply have a cup of tea together and enjoy each other. This is the practice of meditation. Meditation is to calm ourselves and to look deeply into the nature of our suffering.

If the suffering has not been transformed by Friday evening, practice the art of listening like the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara: one person expressing themselves, while the other person listens deeply. When you speak, share what is deep in your heart using loving speech, the kind of speech the other person can understand and accept. While listening, you know that your listening must be of a good quality to relieve the other person of their suffering. When you have been able to resolve your conflict on Friday evening, you have Saturday and Sunday to enjoy being together.

The Peace Treaty and Peace Note are two tools to help us heal anger and hurt in our relationships. When we sign the Peace Treaty, we are making peace not just with the other person, but within ourselves. We do not need the other person to sign it for it to be effective. Even if just one person begins practicing according to it, the situation can already change a great deal. At retreats for couples in our centers, we have a special ceremony in which the Peace Treaty is read and individuals or couples can come up formally to sign it in front of the whole community.

The text of the Peace Treaty follows. It is better to do more than just read it. Try to sign the Treaty in front of others, or even in the presence of family and community. It solidifies the commitment and invites the Sangha's support.

PEACE TREATY

In Order That We May Live Long and Happily Together, In Order That We May Continually Develop and Deepen Our Love and Understanding, We the Undersigned Make the Commitment to Observe and Practice the Following:

<p>I, the one who is angry, agree to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refrain from saying or doing anything that might cause further damage or escalate the anger. 2. Not suppress my anger. 3. Practice breathing and taking refuge in the island of myself. 4. Calmly, within twenty-four hours, tell the one who has made me angry about my anger and suffering, either verbally or by delivering a Peace Note. 5. Ask for an appointment for later in the week (e.g., Friday evening) to discuss this matter more thoroughly, either verbally or by Peace Note. 6. Not say: "I am not angry. It's okay. I am not suffering. There is nothing to be angry about, at least not enough to make me angry." 7. Practice breathing and looking deeply into my daily life—while sitting, lying down, standing, and walking—in order to see: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the ways I myself have been unskillful at times. b. how I have hurt the other person because of my own habit energy. c. how the strong seed of anger in me is the primary cause of my anger. d. how the other person's suffering, which waters the seed of my anger, is the secondary cause. e. how the other person is only seeking relief from his or her own suffering. f. that as long as the other person suffers, I cannot be truly happy. 8. Apologize immediately, without waiting until the Friday evening, as soon as I realize my unskillfulness and lack of mindfulness. 9. Postpone the Friday meeting if I do not feel calm enough to meet with the other person. 	<p>I, the one who has made the other angry, agree to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Respect the other person's feelings, not ridicule him or her, and allow enough time for him or her to calm down. 2. Not press for an immediate discussion. 3. Confirm the other person's request for a meeting, either verbally or by note, and assure him or her that I will be there. 4. Practice breathing and taking refuge in the island of myself to see how: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. I have seeds of unkindness and anger as well as the habit energy to make the other person unhappy. b. I have mistakenly thought that making the other person suffer would relieve my own suffering. c. by making him or her suffer, I make myself suffer. 5. Apologize as soon as I realize my unskillfulness and lack of mindfulness, without making any attempt to justify myself and without waiting until the Friday meeting.
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We vow with the Earth as witness and the supportive presence of our community, to abide by these guidelines and to practice wholeheartedly. We call upon our spiritual ancestors to give us clarity and confidence.

Signed, the Day of in the Year

This note can be used with the Peace Treaty. You can copy it and keep blank copies available in your home and wherever you need it.

PEACE NOTE

Date:

Time:

Dear

This morning (afternoon), you said (did) something that made me very angry. I suffered very much. I want you to know this. You said (did):

Please let us both look at what you said (did) and examine the matter together in a calm and open manner this Friday evening.

Yours, not very happy right now,

PRACTICE: WRITING A LOVE LETTER

If we have difficulties with someone in our life, we might spend some time alone and write a letter to them. We can write the letter to someone we see every day or, just as effectively, to someone we have not seen for years. Many people have found this practice helpful when writing to a family member who is no longer living. The work of reconciliation is a great offering we can make to ourselves, our beloved ones, and our ancestors. We reconcile with the aspects of our mother and father inside of us, forgiving them and accepting them as they are. If we are estranged from them, this may lead us to discover a skillful way to reconcile with them. It is never too late to bring peace and healing into our blood family.

Give yourself at least three hours to write a letter using loving speech.

While you write the letter, practice looking deeply into the nature of your relationship. Why has communication been difficult? Why has happiness not been possible?

Your letter might:

1. Acknowledge the other's suffering
2. Acknowledge your part in the other's suffering
3. Ask for help from the other
4. Acknowledge that you cannot be happy if the other is not happy
5. Promise to stop making the other suffer

Writing a love letter does not mean we cannot tell the truth; we can tell the whole truth but in the language of loving kindness. Before writing we have to practice looking deeply into the mind, the consciousness of the other in order to see their difficulties and suffering. If we show that we understand their suffering or difficulties, they will want to read our letter. People like to read love letters, not hate letters. With this kind of language we will be able to communicate all our insight, all our ideas to our beloved.