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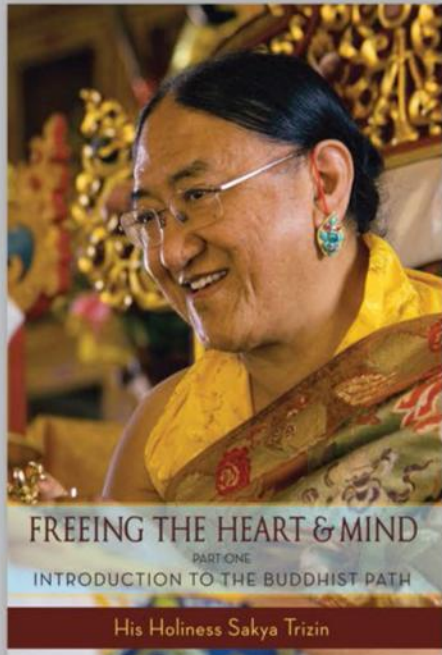
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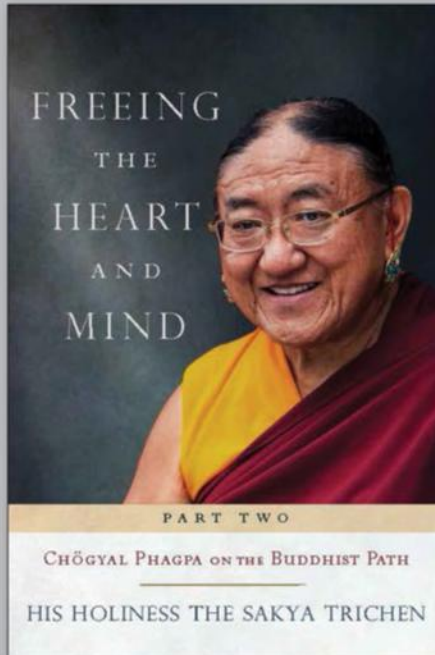


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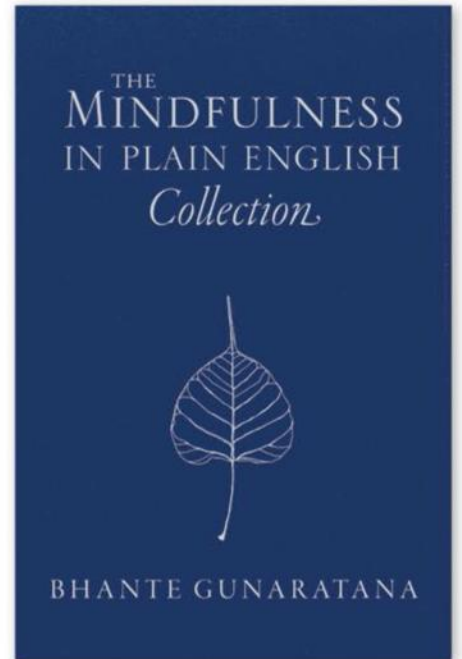
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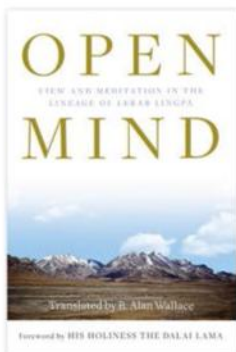
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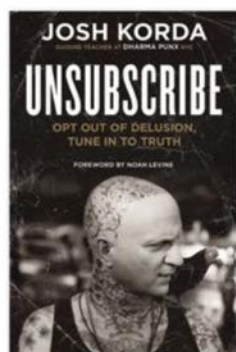


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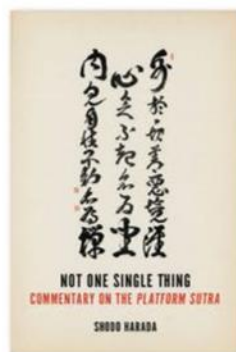
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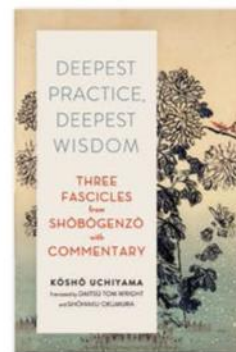
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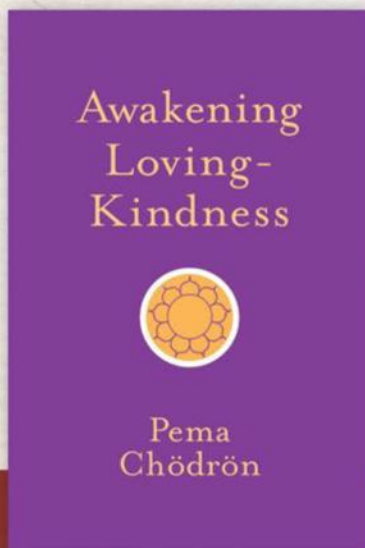


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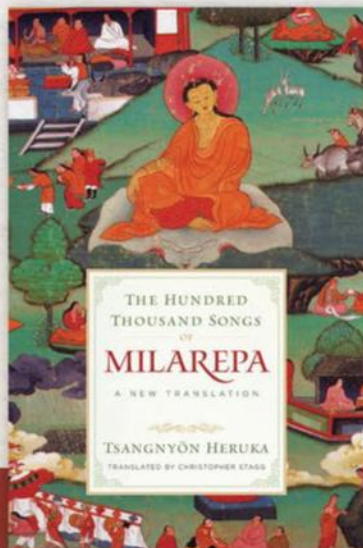
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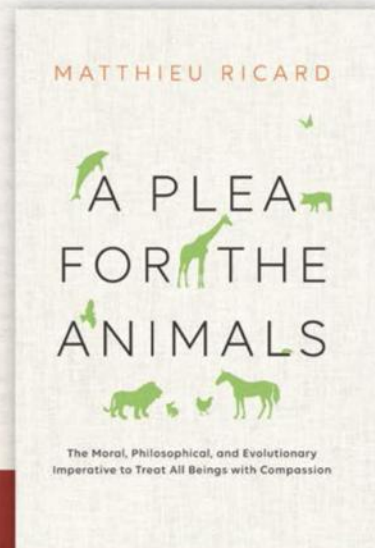
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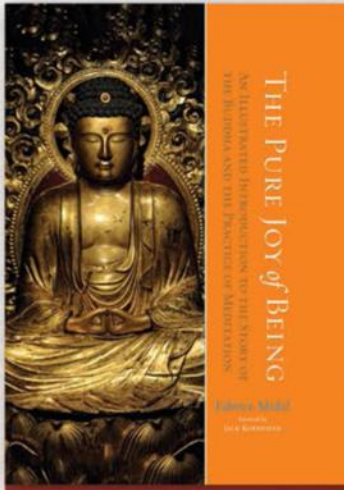


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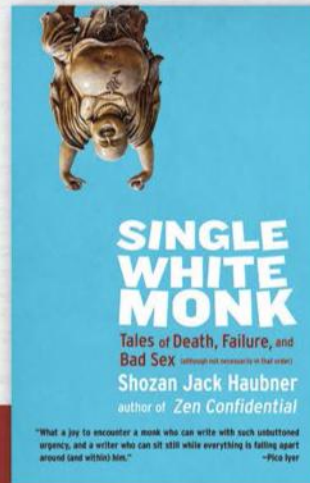
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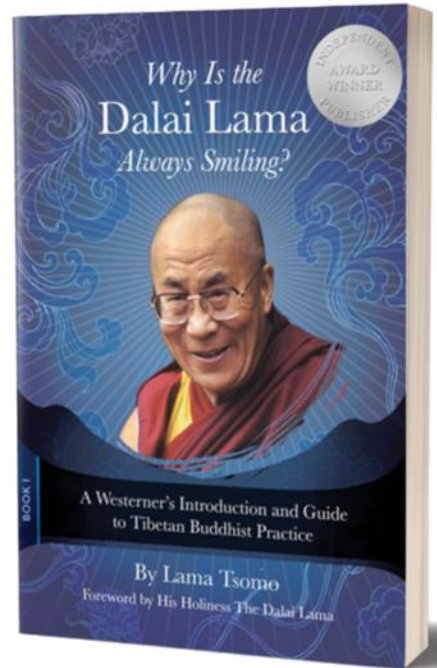
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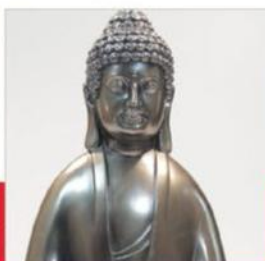
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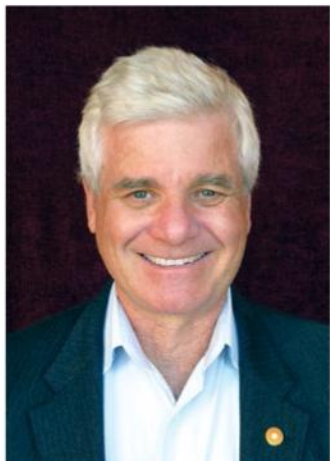
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## Yes, But Does It Work?

SOME YEARS AGO I was talking with Sojun Mel Weitsman, one of the senior figures in American Zen. I noted to Weitsman Roshi, whom I had just met, that many longtime Buddhists weren't sure the practice was working for them.

"How would they know?" was his tart reply.

He was right. It is hard to know what effect spiritual practice is having on us—whether it's really making us kinder and wiser people. We may never know.

We often think of spiritual realization as a kind of lightning bolt, dramatic and obvious. It can happen that way, but more often it's said to be like walking through the fog. Only after a long time do we notice that our robes are wet.

That's why the kind of inner science the Dalai Lama describes, the study of our own consciousness and character, is so difficult. Inner transformation generally happens so gradually—if it happens at all—that it's hard to see. It's why the modern scientific study of meditation described in this issue is valuable. It offers objective evidence to substantiate the subtle changes in mind and character reported by meditators for thousands of years.

Where do I stand after my own forty years of Buddhist practice? I feel inside that the practice is helping me, but I really don't know for sure. As for others, I know many fine and admirable people who are Buddhists, but I also know many good people who are not. We also have to acknowledge that Buddhist communities continue to mirror the systemic problems in American society and experience some of the same abuses of power as other churches. In Myanmar and elsewhere, we see that Buddhism is as susceptible as other religions to the poisons of nationalism and ethnocentrism.

I remember asking my first Buddhist teacher whether the monks in Tibetan monasteries were generally good people. He

thought for a moment, and said a third were good people, a third weren't, and the rest were in the middle. About the same as humanity overall, it seemed to me.

So we Buddhists can't take a "holier than thou" attitude, neither personally nor collectively. But spiritual practice, like life, is a never-ending work in progress. The standard is not perfection, but the kind of day-to-day human goodness exemplified by some of the people you'll meet in this issue.

Consider the heart and courage of Justin von Bujdoss and Tony Bernhard, doing their best to bring some love and help into the hells that are our prisons. Consider how Rev. angel Kyodo Williams has taken her suffering and transformed it into a moving, Buddhist-informed call for justice, awareness, and liberation. Consider spiritual activists like Van Jones, Lama Tsomo, and Mushim Patricia Ikeda teaching us ways to bring healing and good will to a society in deep trouble.

If the proof is in the pudding—in the good that people do—then this is proof that Buddhist practice works. Of course, goodness, like mindfulness, is hard to measure or "prove," and the subjective experience of meditators is, well, subjective. The hard science of meditation is young and the quality of the evidence is still mixed, as the team from Greater Good Science Center points out in its survey of the literature.

So does Buddhism "work"? I say yes, emphatically, and if that's a leap of faith, I am happy to make it. I say this with certainty because I believe something else: that Buddhism is true. It is accurate in its description of reality, of how our minds work, of why we suffer, and of how we can free ourselves from suffering.

That's why I'm sure Buddhism works: it's true, and the truth will set us free.

—MELVIN MCLEOD, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



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Interfaith leaders lock arms to resist white supremacy and neofascism in Charlottesville, Virginia, target of a violent neo-Nazi rally.

## FROM WHERE I SIT Why We Must March

*Only spiritual awakening will produce the deep inner and outer change we need, says DENA MERRIAM of the Contemplative Alliance. That's why sincere practitioners of all faiths must stand up and be heard.*

EIGHT YEARS AGO, the Contemplative Alliance brought a delegation of spiritual teachers to COP 15—the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. There was much optimism going into the conference because Barack

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*DENA MERRIAM has worked for more than twenty years to strengthen the voices of the dharma traditions in the interfaith movement. She is the founder of the Global Peace Initiative of Women and a founding member of the Contemplative Alliance.*

Obama had recently been elected President, and with his commitment to science everyone thought his participation would help galvanize support for climate action.

It was also the first time that civil society organizations from around the world were participating in the debate to such a great extent. Thousands of people poured into Copenhagen. We were one of the few spiritual groups. Our delegation consisted of about twenty religious teachers from various traditions.

What we encountered in Copenhagen made clear the urgent need for spiritual teachers, practitioners, and organizations to bring their meditation cushions, metaphorically speaking, into the center of the public square. At the political level, there was complete dysfunction and breakdown, and no agreement was reached. At the civil society level, there was full-blown frustration and anger.

Our delegation of spiritual teachers was able to maintain an island of sanity, and many people told us how much they



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appreciated our effort to look beyond the economic aspects of curtailing carbon emissions to the moral and spiritual imperatives to act.

The main lesson we learned was that we cannot depend on political leaders, even those we admire, to lead us out of the quagmire the human community has created for itself and the planet. It is up to every one of us to accept the responsibility of serving the greater good in some capacity, especially when we know that our actions today will have great impact on future generations. We cannot expect to see the world move forward without our voices and our actions.

Many of us cultivate a meditation practice in order to address our own needs and motives—the desire to end suffering, to understand the purpose of life, etc. But we can no longer sit for personal needs alone. We must practice for our collective needs. The “I” has transformed into the “we”—the whole community of sentient beings. This is the starting point for turning our focus from the *symptoms* of the problem to the deeper systemic *causes*.

For many years I have seen how faith groups continue to address the symptoms of our society’s deep imbalance by seeking to apply Band-Aids on hemorrhaging wounds. While it is vitally important to give aid to victims of natural disasters and to fight for health care reform, etc., these actions alone will not solve the immense challenges facing our country, and humanity.

We need a total rethinking of our political, economic, social, and food systems so they are more in line with the principles of dharma. Without this systemic shift, the underlying conditions that manifest as the symptoms of poverty, violence, ecological breakdown, and the rise of self-interested leaders will not change.

Only an awakening of spiritual consciousness will move us from a civilization based on domination, greed, and separateness to one based on collaboration, sharing, and connectedness. Such

a shift in consciousness will manifest as respect for all human beings equally, and as love and care for the earth, the rivers and oceans and forests, and all life.

What can we, as individual practitioners, do to help steer our society in a new, more holistic and sustainable direction? Do we take political action, march in the streets, attend conferences, network, and write blogs and tweets? For some, it means all of those avenues; for others it means selective action, perhaps more conscious and directed love for the natural world or more engagement in social justice efforts; and of course more meditation time, and the dedication of the merit of our meditation efforts to the collective good.

I have worked with many spiritual organizations over the years that refrain from making any political statements. I understand their caution, as their followers may span the political spectrum and they are sensitive to a diverse range of beliefs. However, at this point in time, all of us need to take a stand, not for political candidates but for the issues, to look deeply and determine what will advance the well-being of the whole. Buddhists are well suited to help lead this conversation because of their understanding of causes and conditions and interdependence.

The work of spiritual communities is to heal from a place of love, not to exacerbate polarities. The foundation of compassion is to see the “other” as part of the self, and the offspring of compassion is wisdom. By awakening these qualities, we will be better able to address the underlying matrix of conditions that gives rise to hatred, racism, gender bias, economic inequity, ecological destruction, and violence.

Too many people now are distracted from tackling the deeper causes, for which there are no easy or obvious solutions. To activate our compassion and bring the fruits of our meditation into the public square, we as a conscious community have no choice but to stand up, speak out, and serve. ♦

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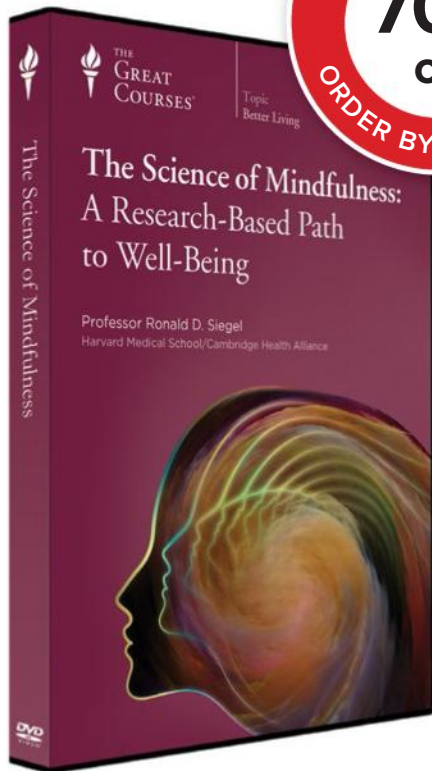
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THIS DHARMA LIFE

## Where I Make Sense

*Buddhism teaches us that the buddhas can appear in different bodies.*

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EVERYTHING IS OF THE NATURE to change. That’s a fundamental Buddhist teaching, and it might be transgender affirming as well.

When I was a trans-struggling child growing up in the 1970s, adults saw me as a nonconforming girl. I knew myself to be a nonconforming boy. I had been taught that everything started and ended with anatomy, but my body made no sense to me. By the time puberty had conclusively rejected any notion that my body would become male after all, I was desperate for ways to integrate my soul into a difficult world, desperate to make my body matter less.

I spent my college years pouring over different forms of Buddhism. I practiced meditation with sanghas in the United States and Sri Lanka. I even sat in a cave on the side of a mountain.

I was drawn to Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, and the uncertainty of Avalokitesvara’s form. Apart from Avalokitesvara’s historical transition from apparently male to apparently female as Guanshiyin (Kuan Yin), it remains a question whether this bodhisattva is articulated as male or female, both, or neither.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha says, “If a living being needs to be saved, Guanshiyin will appear in the body of a buddha.” Buddha then lists more than thirty different bodily manifestations of Guanshiyin, who manifests according to what is needed: male, female, young, old, varied by class, station, occupation,

divine, human, nonhuman. Avalokitesvara/Guanshiyin manifests nonduality—the way that everything in the universe is present in every cell in every being, form and boundlessness together.

So I decided to regard my situation as an opportunity to experience existence in the form into which I was born. It was through form that I could comprehend interbeing, the awareness that everything in this moment is connected to everything else, and always has been and will be.

With that understanding, for the next two decades I dismissed my transgender experience on the grounds that, just as form matters, there is no hierarchy of

forms. The bunny is as necessary and precious as the bee and the human and the sun. The violence taking place outside me is also inside me; we are not separate.

I convinced myself that my body was precious and sacred, and that the specific form didn’t matter. It made no Buddhist sense to say that I wasn’t a woman, and the feminist in me also rejected that articulation. Besides, my particular body (despite its female-appearing shape) was also a source of joy—I was healthy, strong, and grateful for the miracle that life is.

By the time I was in my forties, I could almost ignore the chafing confusion I felt whenever people addressed me as



*FINN ENKE is a professor and the author of Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism (Duke University Press).*

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“ma’am.” I was so used to seeing multiple shifting images in the mirror that I could not see the physical form that most others interpreted as female. I was inured to the hum in my brain during social interactions as I tried to sort out how to act as though I was a woman while my energetic body and soul were busy running away.

The work of passing as what people perceived me to be—female—was so much my normal state that when it busted open one day on an ordinary walk, I literally fell down in my tracks.

Suddenly, I needed to change things—a lot of things—but I didn’t know what or how. Could I change a few things without losing everything? Everything might be of the nature to change, but what do you face when you launch yourself into the unknown?

I changed my name and, for the first time in my life, I felt addressed when people called to me. Half a year later, I changed my pronouns and had to deal with the way that few people were willing to use “he” or “they” pronouns.

More slowly, I discovered that I was clinging hard to the notion that I *shouldn’t* willfully mess with this perfectly good body. I confronted the possibility that for me, this belief was just as much a habituated story as the conventional stories that call some bodies male and some female.

The *Sutra on Invoking Avalokitesvara* is all about deep listening: “We invoke your name in order to practice listening with all our attention and open-heartedness. We will sit and listen without any prejudice. We sit and listen without judging or reacting. We sit and listen in order to understand. We sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear what the other person is saying and also what is being left unsaid.”

What would it mean to listen to myself?

I decided to bring that question to the center of my meditation practice. I cultivated deeply listening to everything

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that arose, without judgment. Observing rather than dismissing questions of physical transition, I felt immediate peace. It suddenly became far more important to me to learn about myself than to resolve the question of physical transition.

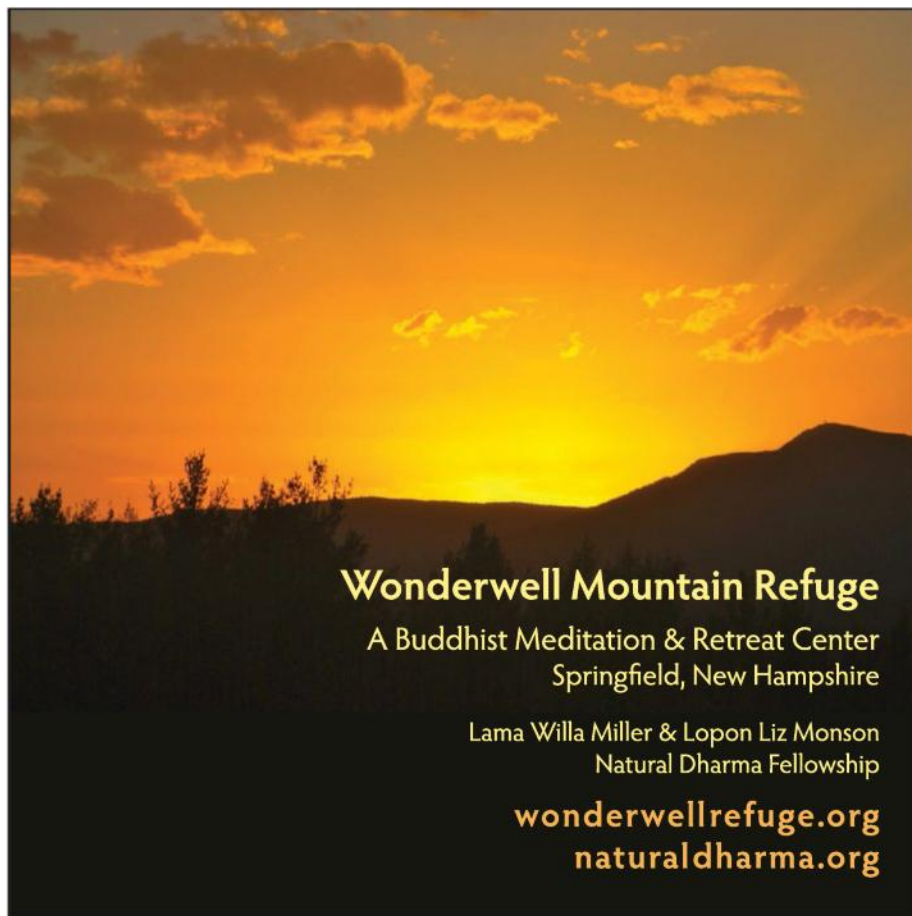
What arose surprised me: I found that multiple shadow selves had physical locations overlaying and inside my physical body. I had mastered shape-shifting to be able to “see” my male “self” while passing as female virtually everywhere. I knew life only in a bifurcated self-sense of materialized/not-materialized personhood, and I could not imagine otherwise.

Eight months of intensive, embodied meditation practice showed me that there was no objective judgment about whether taking testosterone would be a good thing or a bad thing for me, just as being transgender or being anything else is neither a good thing nor a bad thing. Only experience could tell me if testosterone felt right.

This realization brought another congruence so compelling that, even with prescription in hand, I wanted just to observe and enjoy this too, in no hurry to be anywhere other than where I was. Many months later, I started a low dose of topical testosterone, allowing me to navigate and define transition at my own pace.

In this life of transformation, I now feel an unprecedented, unimaginable coherence and ease. For the first time in my life, I make sense to myself. All the shadows have integrated—there is just one of me, and it’s the one I’ve known my whole life. Others still misgender me about half of the time, but I can more easily stay solid and present. No longer racing away, I listen deeply, to myself and others.

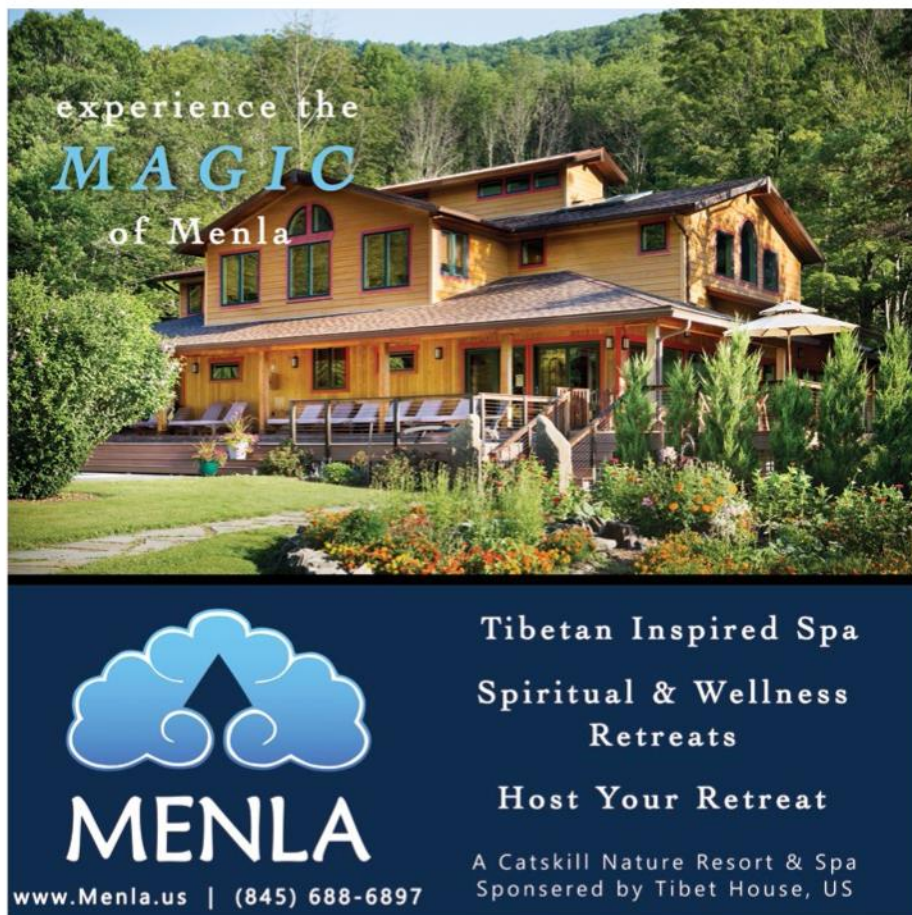
Regardless of how my body changes, regardless of the social and legal prohibitions, I am transgender. I’m not trying to get to some imagined other place. I’m exactly where I need to be, everchanging and present in a nonbinary form. I’m not “in between” anything. I’m just here. ♦



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ALBERTO OSTACCHINI

**Question:** I work at a large energy company. I love my job, my colleagues, and my workplace culture, but intellectually I know that my company does harm to the planet. Can I respect the Buddhist principle of right livelihood and keep a job I enjoy? If so, how?

**Answer:** In our pursuit of right livelihood, it is fitting to consider the harm that our employers may be causing our world. It is equally fitting to recognize that our employers—whether pharmaceutical companies, banks, social media businesses, and yes, even energy corporations—also do tremendous good for others, fostering health, well-being, and safety for billions worldwide.

For Buddhists, holding such a paradox in our hearts can be a noble and inspiring challenge: how can we strengthen the compassionate impulses of modern-day enterprises while limiting the harm?

First, we can recognize the toxicity and damage unfolding from the workplace, but not be blinded by it. As Buddhists,

we are committed to helping others in distress, and what better place to lend a hand than where it is most needed?

Second, we can be engaged Buddhists whatever our occupation—as a scientist, teacher, computer programmer, truck driver, salesperson. We can cheerfully promote what is healthy, fearlessly confront what is toxic, and compassionately protect what is vulnerable. It is our intention that is central: we go to work not just for a paycheck, but to inspire the best in others and encourage health and well-being for all sentient beings.

Finally, we can bring the wisdom we discover in our meditation practice into the workplace. That begins with engaging livelihood as awakened activity. For, in the end, right livelihood is less about standing up for what is “right” and more about authentically and skillfully helping a world that, in so many respects, has lost its way. ♦

*MICHAEL CARROLL is a teacher in the Kagyu-Nyingma school of Vajrayana Buddhism and author of Mindful Leadership Training.*

Send your question to [themoment@lionsroar.com](mailto:themoment@lionsroar.com)



HEART &amp; MIND

# Music Night

*Who says you always have to sit in silence? RYAN WINGER explains how you can bring the mind of meditation to the music you love.*



SYDNEY SMITH

MUSIC IS THE BACKGROUND of our lives—playing in the supermarket, accompanying us as we wait to speak with the next customer service representative, shuffling on our iPhones as we commute to work. Music is ubiquitous, but much of the time we aren't really listening.

Most of us have had a more attentive experience of music as well—truly

---

*RYAN WINGER is a music lover and member of the Orange County Shambhala Center.*

listening with a singular focus. When we really pay attention, we can treasure the feeling and energy of the artists and songs that hold a special place in our hearts. Whether in a concert hall, on a busy street corner, or in the privacy of our home, the experience of connecting with music meaningfully is rich, deep, and sometimes profound.

From the perspective of meditation practice, this experience is the result of tuning in to our present experience through the sense perception of sound.

We are fully there with the music, experiencing the texture, rhythm, melody, harmony, and progression, riding the waves of sound in real time.

My experience of music as part of a group meditation practice began several years ago, when a handful of us in the Washington, DC, Shambhala community were relatively new and enjoying our first tastes of freshness and inspiration from meditation practice. While we were talking over our experience with meditation, we discovered a mutual appreciation of

jazz. We wondered what it would be like to listen to John Coltrane or Sonny Rollins with the same close attention we were applying to our breathing.

At one point, someone said, “Why don’t we get together and meditate, then listen to jazz?” This sparked our first “Music Night.” Here is the format, which you can follow in your own group if you want to try meditating on music.

### Meeting

We meet in a small-group setting (6–12 people) equipped with a stereo system. Each participant brings two pieces of music they feel a connection with. Start with refreshments and conversation for half an hour.

### Opening

To ground ourselves and come fully into the present moment, we gather in a circle and meditate in silence for 10–15 minutes.

### Offering

One by one, we offer a piece of music to the group. Sometimes the person offering the music says a few words about their inspiration for selecting it. Sharing something that is meaningful to us, we become naked and vulnerable. The more meaningful the music, the more naked we may feel.

### Listening

As each person offers their selection, the others practice receiving the music with their full attention. With no need for analysis or commentary, we mostly practice in silence. We go around the entire group at least twice, and sometimes continue listening late into the night.

When we listen openly, we take in much more of the energy and substance of the music—both pleasurable and sometimes not so

pleasurable—than we ordinarily do. Paying close attention, we hear things we have never noticed before. We see in vivid detail how we sometimes relate to our experiences through the lenses of passion, aggression, and ignorance.

Although this practice sounds simple and straightforward, from my perspective it can be meaningful, challenging, and profound. Music represents feelings, emotions, colors, and statements that can’t be expressed through words or images. Sensing our shared connection to the music and being fully present with each other, we feel incredibly intimate and warm.

Music is an important part of my life. On Music Night I felt fully seen, with warmth and love and no judgment. It played a significant role in helping me to connect with my own basic goodness and the basic goodness of others, and it can for you too. ♦



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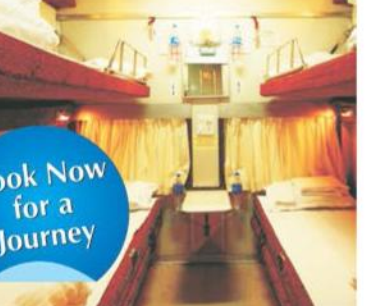
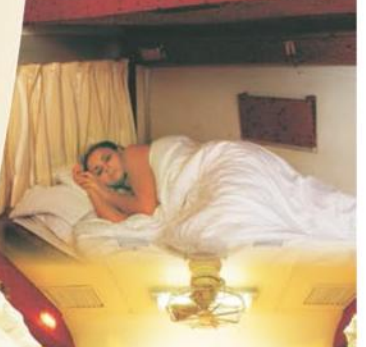
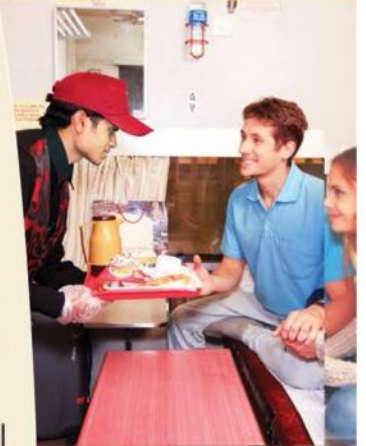
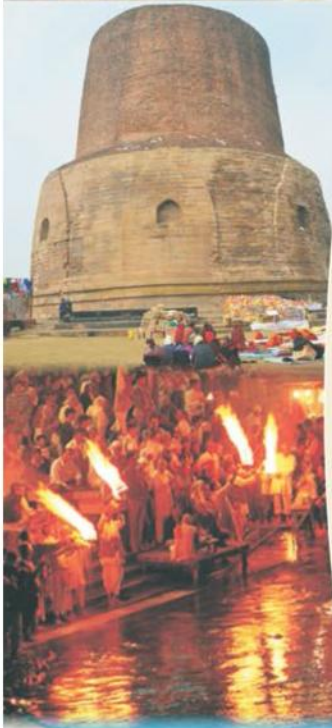
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# How do you express your Buddhist values through political, social, or environmental activity?

My vegetarian lifestyle is the most important thing I can do on a daily basis for my society and our planet.

—Thomas Neale, Boise, Idaho



Where I live, our issues regarding racism, economic disparity, and brutal policing are no secret. We protest so that police will stop killing Black people. We protest to demand truth and justice. As I sit here, exhausted, with aching feet from walking miles this weekend, I realize that the gritty street protest felt exactly like walking meditation for me.

—Lisa Rokusek, St. Louis, Missouri



My social activism currently is asking people who are living in the park, "Do you need anything?" and sharing what I have—fruit, water, snacks, attention, assistance, warmth, love, radical compassionate honesty. This is a living practice of awakening to the illusion of separateness. (All props to Thich Nhat Hahn for teaching this so eloquently).

—Ax Shinsei, Fairbanks, Alaska

The Icarus Project is a support network and education project by and for people who experience the world in ways that are often diagnosed as mental illness. We advance social justice by fostering mutual aid practices that reconnect healing and collective liberation. A lot of us feel we have spiritual emergencies, but we often get locked up for long hospital stays, sometimes with human rights violations. Buddhism doesn't make it all go away, but somehow I am coming closer to acceptance and can work with this.

—Nancy Pontius, Tucson, Arizona



Much of my work focuses on trying to improve policies to ensure the health needs of children who come to the attention of the child welfare system, such as trying to get vulnerable families services they need so that children don't enter foster care. Buddhism has taught me not to attach my mind to specific outcomes, so that I can work extensively on trying to get legislation passed, and then start over and keep going when it isn't enacted.

—Zach Laris, Washington, D.C.

I train guides to provide experiences with a difference for visitors to the South African nature areas. Based on Buddhist principles and philosophy, guides are trained to provide people with a meditative and awareness wildlife experience. Guests leave the African natural environment with a set of tools based on Buddhist principles to apply to the rest of their lives.

—Grant Hine, South Africa

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When you practice metta, you kind of work up a ladder. You go from people like family and friends, people it's easy for you to feel good will toward, to those you don't know. Then, ascending as you are able to—not forcing anything—you extend wishes for safety, happiness, and peace to those you dislike and those you consider your enemies. Finally, at the ultimate level, you extend your good will to all living beings in the universe.

It's a pretty tall order—although possible for some people—to feel loving and kind toward those who are perpetrators of violence and oppression. Even to feel good will toward them might be difficult. So we can frame this meditation as the cultivation of nonhatred and nonfear in order to become stronger, more stable, and more centered. Then we can move forward in a positive fashion to battle oppression and create some improvement for our communities and the United States overall.

Metta meditation can be done in a brief flash of good wishes or it can be practiced continuously over many days. First, find a place to sit or lie down quietly and comfortably. Make sure that you're in a place of reasonable safety. You can close your eyes or keep them open a little. You might take a few deep breaths to begin, calming and steadying yourself to the best of your ability. You might want to gently and lightly place a hand on your heart or your cheek or another part of your body in any way that promotes a feeling of inner safety and that helps to connect you to your courage and compassion. Then you can begin the practice.

### Good Will Toward Yourself

Using these words or others—because you can adapt this however you like—you begin with these wishes of good will to yourself: “May I be safe and protected from physical and mental harm. May I be strong and healthy and enjoy well-being. May I be peaceful and truly happy. May I live my life with more joy and ease.”



### Toward Friends

Now extend those good wishes to those whom you like, your family, mentors, good friends, and others: “May you be safe and protected from physical and mental harm. May you be strong and healthy. May you be peaceful and happy. May you live with joy and ease.”

### Toward Neutral Beings

Now we extend our good will toward neutral beings—people and other living beings we neither like nor dislike. It's always useful to check in: do you actually have neutral beings in your life? I don't. My mind will quickly divide, even very slightly, between those I like and those I don't like. That is something worth noting if it's true for you.

Then you can recite something like: “Though you are a neutral being to me—meaning I do not engage with you that much—I know you are like me in that





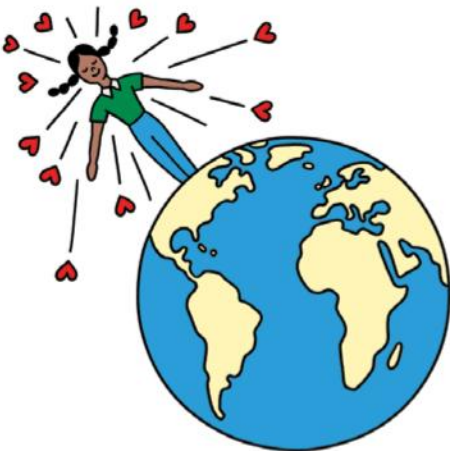
you have joys, sorrows, and pain in your life. Therefore, I wish you well. May you live your life with more joy and ease.”

### Toward Enemies

Thich Nhat Hanh said, “While it is easy to love the lovable, it may be the unlovable who need our love more.” So the next stage is to express your good will, to the extent you can, toward someone who has caused you some slight injury. Then, to the extent possible, you can extend these good wishes toward people who have caused you more pain, and to institutions and organizations that have caused you, your family, or your community pain and suffering. Let this develop naturally; relax and invite yourself to experiment with it.

### Toward All Beings

Finally, you extend metta to all living beings in the universe. You might visualize yourself as a kind of lighthouse, with good



will and loving-kindness streaming out from your heart and body in every direction, including up and down. We want to be 360 degrees of metta. “May all beings be safe and protected from harm. May each and every being without exception be strong and healthy. May all living beings be peaceful and know true happiness. May each and every living being without exception live their lives with more joy and ease. And together may we complete the great journey of awakening.” ♦

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# BEGINNER'S MIND

## BUDDHISM BY THE NUMBERS



RAY FENWICK

**IN BUDDHIST TANTRA** the buddha families are a key way to understand and work with emotional energies. Each family represents a particular emotion, which has both a confused aspect (*klesha*) and an enlightened aspect (wisdom). The families are embodied by 5 primordial buddhas who are arranged in a mandala.

The **Buddha** family is the wisdom of all-encompassing space and the *klesha* of ignorance. Buddha is associated with open sky and represented by the buddha *Vairocana*, who is in the center of the mandala and white in color.

**Vajra** is mirror-like wisdom, which reflects reality purely and directly. Its corresponding *klesha* is anger. Vajra is connected with winter and the element of water and is represented by *Akshobhya*, who is in the east and is blue.

The **Ratna** family's wisdom is equanimity and its confused manifestation is pride. Ratna is associated with richness, autumn, and generosity and is embodied by *Ratnasambhava*, who is in the south and is yellow.

**Padma** is discriminating wisdom, which allows us to see clearly what is needed. Its *klesha* is passion or possessiveness. Padma is associated with spring, blossoming, and fire and is embodied by *Amitabha* Buddha, who is in the west and is red.

**Karma** is all-accomplishing wisdom. Its *kleshas* are jealousy and envy. Karma is associated with summer and the energy of wind and is represented by *Amoghasiddhi*, who is in the north and is green.

## DHARMA FAQs

*We answer your questions about Buddhism & meditation.*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY NOLAN PELLETIER

**What does it mean to be the student of a Buddhist teacher? I have learned a great deal from the books of a prominent Buddhist teacher, but I've never met her. Is it okay if I think of her as my teacher?**

The relationship between a student and teacher can take different forms. At one level, a Buddhist teacher can be a kind of elder, someone who sets an example for you of mindfulness and compassion and offers you instruction in Buddhist insights and practices. All of these can come from reading a teacher's books, and in this way it's entirely sensible to regard someone you've made a strong relationship to through their writings as your teacher.

At another level, a Buddhist teacher can be someone who takes a personal interest in you and gets to know your habitual tendencies—both your potential and your pitfalls. In that way, acting as a “spiritual friend” or even a guru, the teacher can offer care and counsel, and even intervention if need be, in a way that helps you on your path. To be a student in this way probably requires some sort of personal relationship with the teacher, beyond reading their books or watching videos of their talks.

Of course, it's not necessary to focus all of your energy on just one teacher. Many students have more than one teacher, who play different roles in their lives. If you find the books and talks of a particular teacher are starting to



inform and change your life, feel free to think of them as your teacher. The proof is in the benefit.



## Why do Buddhists bow? From my point of view it looks kind of subservient.

Bowing is a gesture of humbleness and respect, one that is easily understood in Asian traditions, but it can seem strange in the modern West. In Buddhism, there are three main kinds of bowing: Bowing toward shrines and statues, and even great

Buddhist texts, is a sign of respect for the teachings, those who embody them, and the virtuous qualities—such as non-violence—they uphold. Bowing to teachers shows your respect for the example they set and your willingness to follow their teachings. When students bow to each other, it is in mutual recognition of the inherent goodness in each of us. In every case, bowing also inserts a mindful pause into everyday encounters—a micro-moment of meditation.

## When I meditate, I often get drowsy after awhile. At other times, I'm agitated and feel like jumping off my cushion. In neither case do I feel like I'm meditating correctly. What do I do?



As long as there have been meditators, people have been encountering the extremes of drowsiness and agitation. This isn't surprising, since in our daily lives we go through cycles of high and low energy. So why not when we're meditating?

Drowsiness and agitation are two of the classic "obstacles" in meditation, and there are a couple of recommended "antidotes" you can try. When your mind is drowsy and dull, try straightening your posture and raising your gaze, bringing more space and energy into your meditation. Conversely, when your mind is agitated and full of wild energy, lower and shorten your gaze and concentrate more narrowly on your breath.

In either case, consistent, light-handed effort is recommended. You don't have to condemn yourself for doing it "right," and you can listen to the signals your drowsiness and agitation are sending you. Perhaps you just haven't been getting enough rest, or there's a crisis in your life you aren't acknowledging. You can use the drowsiness or the agitation as a simple reminder to return to the breath, the body, the room, and so on. As you keep returning, these obstacles simply become reminders of why you sat down to meditate in the first place: to be fully here with whatever is going on. ♦

Tell us what you'd like to know about Buddhism and meditation at  
[themoment@lionsroar.com](mailto:themoment@lionsroar.com)

## WHO? WHAT? WHERE?



PETER AARON / ESTO

## THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

**FEATURING ARTWORK FROM** the Himalayas and surrounding regions, the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood is devoted to exploring Buddhist ideas, art, and practices. It is both an art museum and a vibrant educational and cultural center.

Founded by philanthropists Shelley and Donald Rubin, the museum has offered more than 100 exhibitions and 3,500 programs for 1.4 million visitors since 2004. The permanent collection focuses on art from the Vajrayana tradition, while special exhibitions offer an imaginative mix of media and modern and traditional references.

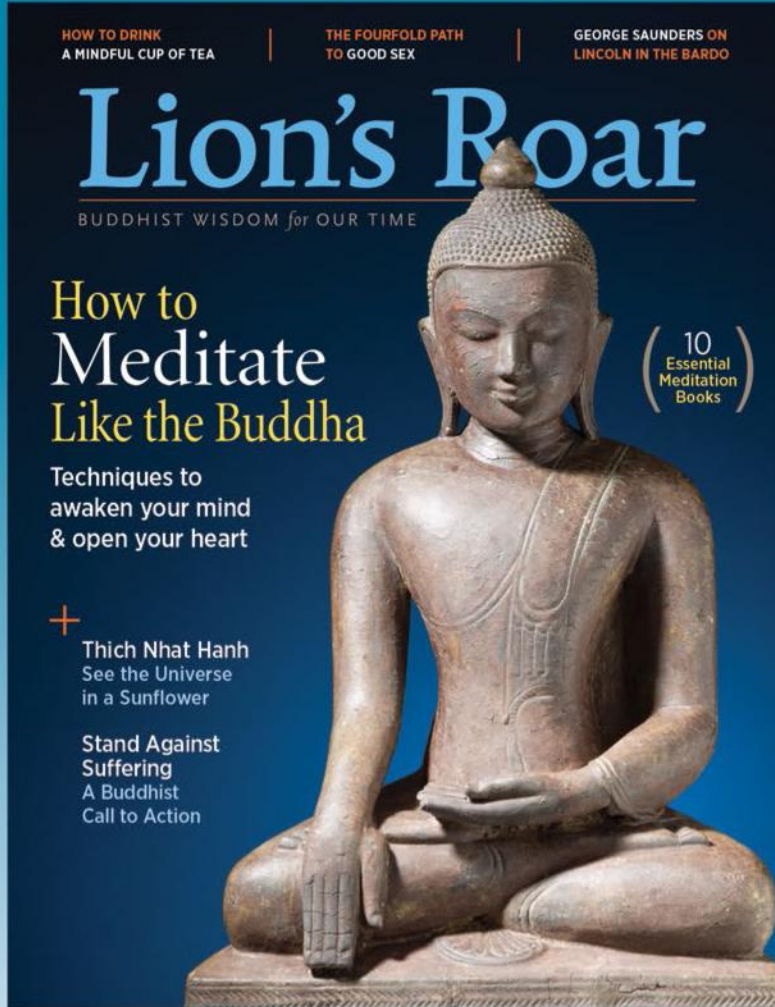
The current special exhibition, *The World Is Sound* (ending January 8), challenges visitors to listen with their whole body to the sounds of Tibetan Buddhism. The exhibit is cyclical—tracing creation, death, and rebirth—and includes the translation of a funerary text and the sounds of a human thigh bone trumpet.

A new aspect of the ongoing exhibit *Sacred Spaces* addresses how pilgrimage can benefit the future self. Video screens embedded in taxi meters capture an artist's journey to sacred sites in India, while videos of Tibetan Buddhist rituals around Mount Kailash show how place can affect spiritual practice.

The Rubin features five gallery floors, along with a theater, a café, and an education center. Live events curated by director of programs Tim McHenry bring together Buddhist teachers with leaders in the arts, philosophy, and science. The Rubin also offers film screenings, concerts, workshops, meditations, and an annual *Night at the Museum*-type sleepover for adults.



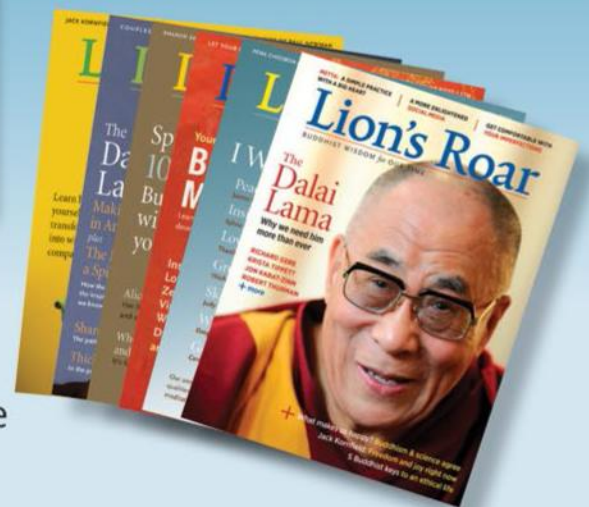
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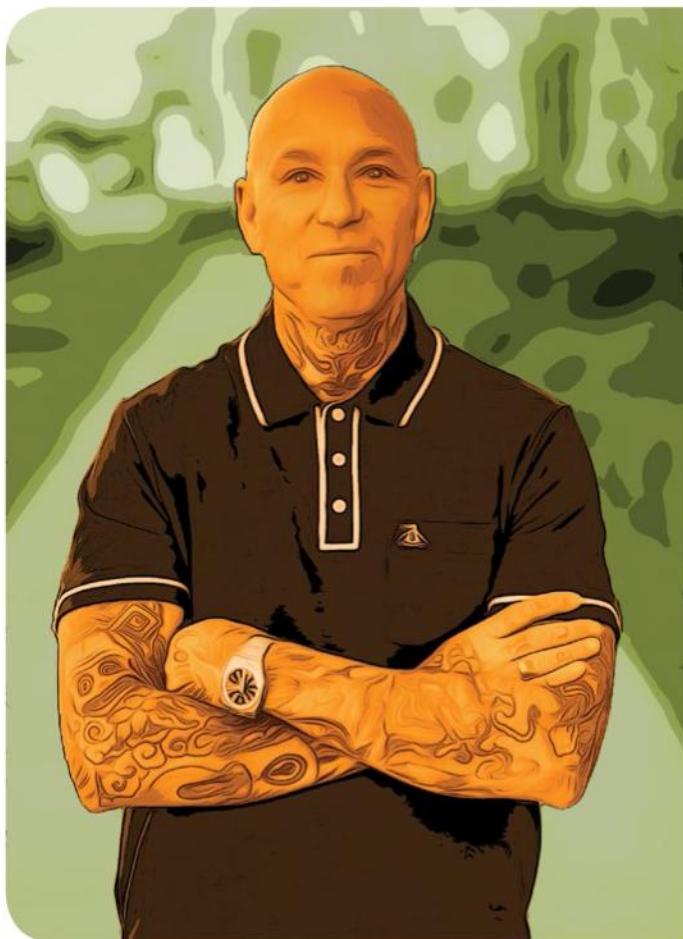
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JAKOB LAGERSTEDT

## MEET A TEACHER

## Noah Levine

I WAS BORN INTO a dharma family in 1971 in California. My father, the author Stephen Levine, was engaged in practice and teaching dharma. I suffered so much in my childhood that I became addicted to drugs at a very young age. At 17 years old, while incarcerated in a juvenile detention center, I began to meditate. For the last 30 years I have been practicing primarily in the Theravada tradition. I began teaching dharma almost 20 years ago with the encouragement and support of my teachers, Jack Kornfield and Ajahn Amaro, and my father, and in 2007 I founded Against The Stream Buddhist Meditation Society. I also began to integrate my Buddhist path with working with those facing addiction, and in 2014 I created Refuge Recovery, a Buddhist approach to treating addiction. As for my personal life, I have two children, ages five and eight, and they are awesome. ♦

### What is your practice tradition?

Against The Stream (Theravada-influenced American Buddhism).

### Favorite meditation practice?

Texas hold-em.

### Recommended dharma books?

*A Gradual Awakening*, by Stephen Levine.

### Your favorite virtue?

Honesty.

### Your chief characteristic?

Irreverence.

### Your principal poison?

Caffeine.

### Your idea of happiness?

Acceptance of what is while working toward positive change.

### Your idea of misery?

Resistance to what it is. Clinging to what was.

### If not yourself, who would you be?

Sid Vicious or Dartha.

### Name three of your heroes.

Sid Vicious, Joe Strummer, and Vinny Ferraro.

### The natural talent you'd most like to have?

Telepathy.

### Your favorite author?

Haruki Murakami.

### Your favorite musician or group?

The Clash.

### Your favorite current TV show?

*Outsiders*.

### What's for dinner?

Sushi.

### A motto that represents you?

Against greed, hatred, and delusion. Against the Stream. Meditate and destroy!

### Guilty pleasure?

Cuban cigars.



Warden Helena Smith calls von Bujdoss “a gentle giant.” She says, “Love is what we get from him.”





PHOTO BY A. JESSE JIRYU DAVIS

# Disrupting Suffering in Rikers Island

No one escapes suffering in Rikers Island. Not prisoners, not staff. **JENNIFER KEISHIN ARMSTRONG** profiles Justin von Bujdoss, the first-ever Buddhist chaplain in America's most notorious jail.

**I**N A SMALL, CINDER-BLOCK ROOM lit by shards of afternoon sun sneaking in through windows in the ceiling, thirteen jail guards in dark blue uniforms sit quietly on gray plastic chairs. The only sound comes from the blowing fan and the occasional squawk of their handheld walkie-talkie radios.

The room is labeled “chapel,” though the only sign of that purpose is a basic wooden altar and lectern in the front, shoved to the side. The guards—correctional officers, or “COs” in official parlance—softly confess the most difficult feelings they face daily to the man in a light blue shirt and tie sitting at the front of the room.

“Tired,” one says. “Anxious,” another says. “Disappointment,” says a third. “Anger,” says a fourth. “Sleepiness,” “lack of trust,” and “impatience” follow. Several guards mention variations on the theme of not wanting to be there, not wanting to be at work.



New York City's Rikers Island is a 400-acre complex of ten separate jails. It houses some 10,000 prisoners at a time, more than 80% awaiting trial.

The bearded, bespectacled man leading the discussion is chaplain Justin von Bujdoss. He takes it all in with accepting nods, then issues some instructions: Focus on your breath, he tells them. Inhale something that makes you feel good and exhale something you're having a hard time with.

The room settles and calms. Noises continue to drift in from the fraught environment surrounding them at Rikers Island, New York City's main jail complex. Planes from nearby LaGuardia Airport jet overhead. Gates in the nearby hallway open and slam. The sounds of jangling keys, voices, and radios continue to drift through. But inside the chapel, there are discernable moments that feel like peace. So peaceful that a few COs in the back row have nodded off to sleep. But at Rikers, any peace feels like a hard-won victory.

"If you're irritated and pissed off," von Bujdoss tells them, "you can come back to this feeling of centeredness and it can help your decision making."

This message is exactly why von Bujdoss, a Vajrayana Buddhist teacher, became the troubled facility's first chaplain last year. Chosen over candidates from more mainstream religions like Judaism and Christianity, von Bujdoss does more than teach weekly meditation classes for officers. He also tends to their spiritual and emotional needs in illness and death, and helps them deal with the everyday stressors that come with working at a jail so notorious for its brutality that it has been targeted for eventual shut-down by the city.

Von Bujdoss sees his job as working to "disrupt suffering." "It's a tough place, right?" he says. "I try to give them space to cut through things that are hard. Even in these short sessions, we can come back to an experience that's lighter, with a greater awareness of body and mind."

His presence alone helps, says Warden Helena Smith, who is in charge of the facility's mental health center. "He's like this gentle giant," Smith says. "He has an ability to put people at ease. He's very kind and nurturing. Love is what you get from him."

Now forty-two, von Bujdoss found Buddhism as a teenager growing up in the artsy SoHo neighborhood of Manhattan. Because his father was a painter, he was constantly exposed to new forms of art; when he found a book on Tibetan art at age sixteen, it inspired him not to follow in his dad's footsteps, but to become a monk. He was so serious about it that his high school girlfriend rejected him, worried she would stand in the way of his dreams and his spiritual path.

During his college years, in 1995, he made his first pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya in India, the site of Buddha Shakyamuni's enlightenment. Before going, he worried the trip would be difficult. "But when I got off the plane, I was completely captivated, even by the smell of the air, which was like burning rubber," he recalls. "I was magnetized."

There he studied Theravada Buddhism, then traveled to Sikkim, where he met a Tibetan nun, Ani Zangmo. She would become his first teacher. After graduating from Antioch College with a degree in Religious Studies in 1997, he sold most of his possessions and went to India for a year to continue his Buddhist training with Ani Zangmo. She died while he was there, so he became a student of her teacher, Bokar Tulku Rinpoche. Then Bokar Rinpoche died in 2004.

Death became a major theme in von Bujdoss's practice. "When you have a teacher who dies, it's terrible. But there's this whole other side to it—developing intimacy with a teacher who's passed," he says. "It's a bit like *Star Wars*. They never really die. The instructions are still alive. I feel closer to Ani Zangmo now than I ever did. I feel like what I do with the Department of Corrections is very much aligned with the kind of person she was. She was very engaged."

For several years, von Bujdoss worked renovating homes in the United States and making frequent trips to India to study Buddhism for months at a time. But when he got married and had children—he has three sons who are now seventeen, four, and two—he realized he had to stop separating America from India, life from practice.

That realization, plus his interest in practicing with death, led him to train as a chaplain at the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care as part of its first graduating class in 2009. During his training at Beth Israel and New York Presbyterian medical centers, he served mostly in intensive care units and on psych floors. He then worked in a home hospice program while founding and running Tsurphu Goshir Dharma Center in Brooklyn under his teacher, Goshir Gyaltab Rinpoche, and starting a volunteer program to teach meditation to inmates at Rikers.



By the time he heard the city was looking to hire a chaplain for Rikers, he was spending three days a week there as a volunteer and several more hours per week working with administrators to improve the programs he ran there. It made sense for him to apply. He was hired in September 2016. At first, he focused mainly on responding to staff health problems and hospital visits, a natural transition from his hospice work. Now he runs the weekly meditation program, works to develop other emotional and spiritual support programs, provides one-on-one counseling for officers, and is starting a chaplaincy unit. The goal is to hire at least three chaplains, and eventually expand to up to a dozen, like the New York Police Department's chaplain unit.

When Warden Smith was asked to hire a chaplain for the jail as part of overall efforts to better support staff and help with stress reduction, she could have chosen a candidate from a religion more prevalent among the staff—Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, or Baptist, for instance. But in the end, she felt von Bujdoss was best for the job.

“We struggled with that,” she says. “I don’t think I know *anyone* in the department who is of the Buddhist faith. But when I looked at all of the things that Justin could be for us, that was the decision I made.” She appreciated the work he had done at Rikers as a volunteer and knew that inmates had benefitted from his work. “I decided I’d deal with the naysayers. He’s just a dynamo when it comes to helping people.”

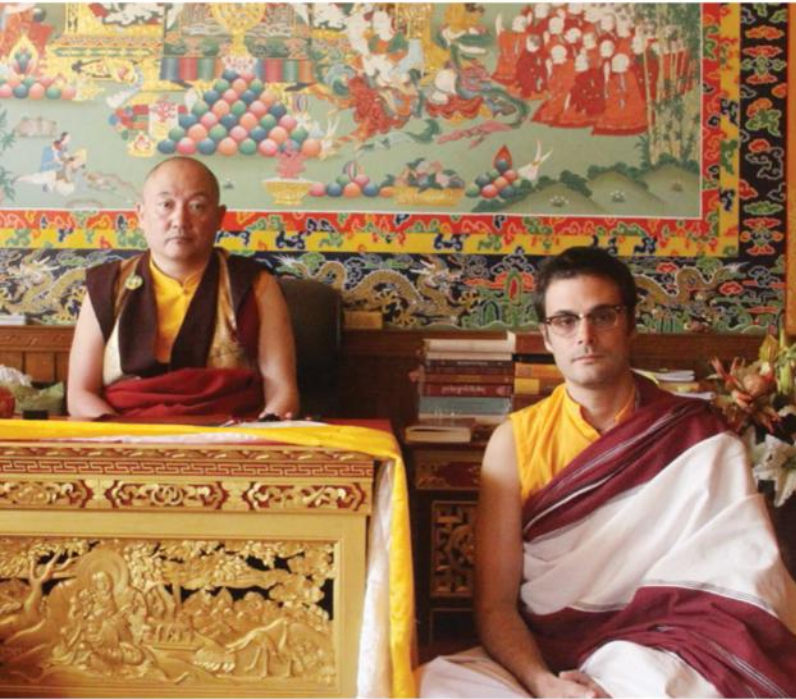
As von Bujdoss says, “Once people begin to understand how deeply rooted in being nonjudgmental the Buddhist tradition is, they realize it’s a great fit. It’s useful in situations of great stress.”

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*Von Bujdoss usually includes three short meditations in his hour-long sessions with Rikers Island staff. He says the nonjudgmental nature of Buddhism makes it useful in situations of great stress.*



To that end, von Bujdoss, as a Buddhist, offered one particularly distinctive skill: meditation instruction. He usually includes three short meditations, as well as some discussion, in his hour-long sessions with the officers. In one meditation, he talks them through focusing on sounds within the room, within the building, and then outside the building. In others,



*Von Bujdoss with his teacher, Goshir Gyaltzab Rinpoche. He views his job as part of his Buddhist practice because he must constantly return to the idea of awakening in the moment.*

he instructs them to focus on their breath, or to do a body scan. Sometimes he employs compassion or loving-kindness meditations. “That helps in this situation, especially visualizing people they have difficulties with,” he says. “It’s empathy building.”

When he began teaching meditation, the sessions were mandatory at first. Predictably, not all of the officers were enthusiastic about it. “The first day I asked everyone to share something they were grateful for, and something that was difficult,” he says. “Almost every response was ‘pass.’ On my way home that day, I was like, ‘Man, I don’t know.’” But when the classes became optional, he ended up with a core group of officers who embraced them. The group members helped each other through life challenges, like the loss of a loved one or the birth of twins, a joyful event complicated by the job’s demands.

One of the biggest challenges and joys for von Bujdoss is teaching meditation to non-Buddhists. The task requires that he stay away from what he calls “the Tibetan nitty-gritty. If the goal is to convey experience, you need to find your own words instead of speaking in Buddhist jargon. Part of my dharma practice is trying to unpack the tradition to bring it to this facility.”

Of course, Rikers isn’t just any facility. It is among the nation’s most infamous jails, with an average daily population of about 10,000 inmates—the vast majority of whom have not been convicted of a crime, but are awaiting trial or being held on bail. Rikers is legendary for frequent violence between inmates and officers and was named one of the ten worst correctional facilities in the country by *Mother Jones* in 2013. In 2014, nearly 10,000 assaults were reported on the grounds and a U.S. Department of Justice investigation concluded that the facility promoted a “culture of abuse.” In June 2015, former inmate Kalief Browder committed suicide after spending three years in the facility refusing to plead guilty to charges that he stole a backpack at age sixteen. These incidents and others led to a public outcry that persuaded New York Mayor Bill de Blasio to announce plans this year to close Rikers within ten years.

Von Bujdoss went into the job knowing the facility’s dire reputation. But he takes a typically grounded Buddhist approach to the situation. “I see myself as someone who facilitates change by alleviating suffering,” he says. “What’s going on here is way beyond my control, so it’s about me helping people to touch the experience they’re having right now, which can help to cause a shift.”

Smith says von Bujdoss’s effect on the officers is undeniable. The meditation class regulars have told her they love the service. “They don’t want him to stop,” she says. “They always want to know when he’s coming back again.”

She also praises his efforts to continue improving officers’ lives, such as his recent attendance at a Princeton seminar on “moral injury,” a psychological term for trauma associated with job requirements that go against workers’ moral values. “Being a jail guard goes against your moral values if you have any humanity,” she says. “Who wants to lock someone up in a cage?”

Von Bujdoss also brings in guest meditation instructors, such as Kripalu Center teachers who shared some hatha yoga-based techniques. “He’s always collaborating with someone somewhere to help us,” Smith says.

Von Bujdoss views his job as part of his Buddhist practice, by constantly returning to the idea of awakening in the moment.

“If I can bring myself back to expansiveness, something where I feel connected to my tradition and whole and present, then that experience can be had by other people,” he says. “I’ve come to love the Department of Corrections because of the intensity. Intensity allows for powerful experience. You can turn yourself off to it or step into it.”

In fact, he challenges himself to embrace his own anxieties in the job: “I’m a very private person, but I’m the only chaplain for 13,000 people. That forces me to step into this place of vulnerability and just let go. It’s like when you’re learning how to swim and someone pushes you into the pool.”

As for his personal Buddhist practice, he prefers the comfort of home with his own shrine. The dharma center he founded





*Rikers Island staff complain of exhaustion, anxiety, impatience, lack of trust, and not wanting to be at work. “If you’re irritated and pissed off,” von Bujdoss tells them, “you can come back to a feeling of centeredness and it can help your decision making.”*

in Brooklyn in 2012 is no longer operating, and he hasn’t felt motivated to join someone else’s. “I’d never practiced at a dharma center until I opened one,” he says. He travels to teach, visiting dharma groups in upstate New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. He also returns to India about once a year to see his teacher, Gyalsab Rinpoche, in Sikkim.

That dance he’s done all of his spiritual life—negotiating the line between the sacred and the profane, practice and “real life,” India and America—might ultimately be what defines his unique ability to help a place in crisis like Rikers. He refuses to reduce his teachings for the officers to simple secular mindfulness, even as he strives to find his own, nontraditional ways of expressing the dharma to Rikers staff.

“I’m interested in helping people become a little bit liberated,” he says. “That’s the fun part. There’s energy in taking things out of traditional language and putting it into how corrections officers relate.”

His original teacher, Ani Zangmo, died 12 years ago, but he finds her teachings coming to him more than ever at Rikers, more than 7,500 miles west of where he first studied with her.

When he first met her at age twenty, he told her he wanted to learn every little detail about the Buddhist tradition, to master it, and get a degree in it. “She saw immediately that that was bullshit,” he says. “That was the worst thing I could do for myself. She was practicing in a male-dominated Himalayan tradition, and she knew the world doesn’t revolve under those rules. So now I’m turning into my spiritual mother.”

Nowhere is that more evident than when von Bujdoss is leading his meditation session with officers.

“Inhale what you need right now,” he tells them in his instantly calming voice. “If it’s rest and relaxation, let it be that. If it’s peace, let it be that.” Muffled yells drift into the room from the hallway. The officers remain quiet, upright in their chairs, eyes closed—except for the one guy in back who’s casually lounging across a chair or two. Another plane flies overhead, but no one flinches. One officer leaves about halfway through the ten-minute meditation, but still, no one flinches.

Afterwards, one of the officers shares a thought: “I feel peaceful.” In a place like Rikers Island, can you ask for anything more? ♦





*Inmates at Folsom Prison's Psychiatric Services Unit are locked in these individual metal cages while they are being taught mindfulness. The cages, called "therapeutic modules," are covered in thick plastic shields.*





# Shit Happens

**TONY BERNHARD** isn't afraid to get real when he teaches at Folsom Prison's Psychiatric Services Unit, where men in cages learn to meditate.

**I**F IT'S QUIET SPACE you need to practice mindfulness meditation, beginning—much less maintaining—a regular sitting schedule would seem almost impossible in a solitary housing unit in Folsom Prison.

In Folsom Prison's Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU), I meet with men in cages called "therapeutic modules." They look like oversized phone booths: gray, with small seats and tables—only small shelves, really—welded to the inside walls. The cages have thick plastic shields in front of the grids and bars to protect clinicians from being spat on.

The cages have slots that allow the guards to remove the handcuffs the men must wear when they are not in their cells. Many are too dangerous to be allowed in the presence of another person without manacles. Even with manacles, some of them regularly sustain injuries when they go off on the guards who are leading them to or from their cells. When that happens, the guards just slam them to the floor.

Because the PSU is a medical environment, I'm not allowed to talk about the Buddha, the dharma, or the sangha. But the dharma context of the meditation teachings comes through anyway, and I've learned to translate the teachings into street language and modify standard meditation instructions to fit the conditions and the men.

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*TONY BERNHARD is a Buddhist chaplain who practices with inmates at Folsom Prison near Sacramento.*

PHOTOS BY JULIE SMALL





*The prisoner's view from inside a cage. Bernhard teaches mindfulness sitting in a chair in the center of the semi-circle.*

On a recent Thursday, I met with three men in a square, concrete room with seven or eight cages arranged in a semicircle around the center where a clinician sits or stands. Similar rooms host recreational and therapy groups. Some groups are designed for lifers only, some for movie watching, some for anger management classes. My group is for mindfulness training and sometimes for managing pain with mindful attention. We meet for two-hour-long sessions each week in groups of two to four.

Conventional teaching methods frequently won't work in this setting. For example, some men won't close their eyes. "This is prison," they say. "I'm not closing my eyes." Many initially won't adjust their posture to take up a comfortable position either—defiance is a default mode.

I have encountered men who are not able to put their attention on their breath. One man had done himself such damage with drugs that he panicked every time he'd notice his breathing.

Others can't sit still because of significant physical pain. For some men, breaking their attention away from the voices they're hearing in their heads is a major challenge. And they come to me in various states of medication-induced daze.

On this Thursday, one of the men I was meeting had never done mindfulness practice before. Also, I was accompanied by a clinician who was learning a new software system, and so as I taught she and a tech assistant were speaking in whispers at a small table behind me.

Outside the room, the concrete corridor echoed with the grating sounds of chains, doors banging, muffled rock'n'roll from rooms, voices of inmates calling out to each other, and guards in heavy boots tromping up and down the halls. All this played out against the background of the rattling air conditioning vents.

One of the three inmates was already quite familiar with meditation, having learned about it in another facility before being



transferred to Folsom. His face and scalp were covered in tattoos, his eyes were rimmed with black like a raccoon's, the end of his nose and nostrils were solid black, his lips were tattooed with marks to make it look like they were sewn closed like Frankenstein's, and his cheeks had some kind of construction tattoo that resembled an erector set. Yet, he had an easy manner. He told me he got himself into the PSU for his own protection, which he did by attacking a guard at another prison.

The second man had been practicing with me for about six months and had managed to cultivate a serious meditation practice. Though he took to it right away, on his third session he became frustrated with a delay in starting the session. Standing up in his cage, he began bellowing at another caged inmate, threatening him: "Just shut the fuck up or I'm going to murder you. I came here to meditate." This day, however, he was waiting patiently.

The third man was new.

After a few minutes of introductions, I began by asking them to acknowledge and work with the noises they could hear around them. The two experienced men took up sitting positions on the little seats in their cages, backs leaning against the wall behind them, hands resting on their thighs. The new man sat leaning forward with one elbow on the small metal shelf welded to the wall of his cage, looking at me expectantly through the bars and plastic screen.

"Are you able to find a comfortable way to sit without moving for about twenty minutes?" I asked him. He said nothing, but relaxed back against the wall of the cage, leaving his right forearm resting on the shelf, still looking at me.

"Okay then. Let's begin by closing our eyes and feeling our bodies from the inside with our mind."

I noticed that the new man had now closed his eyes. I gave the men a couple of moments to check in with their physical sensations. Then I asked them to experience the different sounds around them: "There's whispering in the room. There's the music down the hall. Notice whether you've already figured out the name of the tune they're playing."

I then offered a bit of neuroscience: "Your brain is designed to keep track of what's going on, to make sure things are safe. When you're doing that, though, notice that you're not feeling your feet, or your breath."

If at this point I had simply left them on their own to "follow their breath," the experienced men might do fine, but the new one would most certainly have just gotten lost in thinking and listening and gotten bored. So I continued with the guidance, aiming their attention at the pure subjectivity of their experience.

"Notice," I suggested, "how in the same way nobody else feels your feet or your breath, nobody else can hear what you're hearing or experience the thoughts coming and going through your mind." I leave the comment hanging for a moment. "But do you have any doubt that you're hearing sounds, feeling your body, or thinking thoughts?"

We sat for a few minutes, mindful of the breath, the whispering, the clicking of the computer, the music, the rattling air conditioners, and the muffled talking we could hear through

the walls, and then checked back in with our physical sensations.

I then brought their attention to their own thinking in a mindful way, because I often get only one chance to instruct someone before they're transferred or drop out or, as can happen, if the guards simply decide not to bring them to the group anymore. I wanted to make sure I did this for the new man. If he came back, we'd then have a chance to explore things further.

"Let's look at thoughts for a minute. Can you recall your mother or father?" I let that register. "Notice what you remember first. What memory comes up first? Does a particular picture or image come to mind?"

"Nobody else knows your feelings about your mother and father or how you feel about each of us in the room. Your experience of those thoughts is completely personal, no matter in what form or detail they appear for you. All these sounds, body feelings, and thoughts make up everything in your full, subjective experience."

I let them sit for a minute or two with this before getting to the formal meditation instruction.



*Inmates are shackled whenever they are outside the cells and staff like Bernhard must wear knife-proof vests. Fearful of letting down their guard, some prisoners refuse to close their eyes while meditating.*



*The Psychiatric Services Unit at Folsom Prison. “Shit happens” is Bernhard’s interpretation of the first noble truth. Through meditation, prisoners learn to “not to make it worse.”*

“After counting three breaths, see if you can keep track of where your mind goes. If you can’t, or if it doesn’t go anywhere, try another three breaths whenever you can.”

I let them remain sitting for almost ten minutes this way.

“As we come to the end of this session, check in with your body, notice any calm that might be present, and then give yourself three more mindful breaths and return your attention to the room.”

The three men ended their sitting and, once all our eyes were open, we sat there for a few moments.

“How was that?” I asked the new man.

“It was good,” he said. “It was calm.”

“Could you keep track of three breaths in a row?” I asked him. “Three breaths were okay,” he said. “I did it a few times.”

“That’s the heart of this practice,” I said. “That’s where we want to start.”

In helping people focus on their subjective experience, I’ve found it doesn’t take years of practice to learn to pay mindful attention to it. Sometimes only a couple of months of even half-committed work is enough for someone to develop a new perspective on what’s happening to them.

I urged these men to take the “Three Breath Trip” as often as they can. I told them of one inmate who found himself doing it fifty or sixty times a day, whenever a commercial break came up on TV. The Three Breath Trip became this inmate’s primary practice, subtly promoting an inclination to notice the inward, tactile, subjective side of experience rather than always focusing outward, toward the experiences that thoughts and feelings are reactions to.

For inmates, the relaxation feels good too, even if it’s only slight. For some men, it is the only pleasant sensation they can manage. For many, it is more work than they can manage and they give up. But for a few, it has enabled them to recast their experience over the course of a few months.

We spent the remaining hour talking about whatever was coming up for them. Every once in a while we’d pause for three breaths. I then offered them dharma teachings to frame their experiences. But when I meet with men, I don’t lay out the par-

adigm as four truths or even as anything systematic. “Shit happens,” I said to them. This is my formulation of the first noble truth. It’s just the way life is. They all recognize it. Nobody disputes it.

“And we usually make it worse,” I said. “Even when we try to make things better, they often go bad, right?” Nobody disagreed with this formulation of the second truth either. Adding craving to the shit that’s already on the table is something they all have experience with.

“But you don’t have to make it worse,” I suggested, translating the third truth of the cessation of suffering.

The injunction “Don’t Make It Worse” is the single most effective teaching I’ve found: don’t pile more shit onto the pile that’s already there. That inspiration has redirected the efforts of a couple of dozen men over the years.

“Be realistic and don’t be stupid” is how they learn right view and right intention. We riff on that whenever it’s apparent that unrealistic expectations are leading to frustration and anger. “What do you expect?” they’ll sometimes say to each other now. “Shit happens. Guards are guards and not nurses. What do you expect from them? If you expect them to be nurses or even to be honorable, you’re just setting yourself up for frustration and anger.”

After our sitting, we always talk a bit about how we can learn to not make things worse (right speech and action) by training ourselves with increasingly steady mindfulness (right mindfulness and concentration) to notice the impulses that drag us into “worse” and give us a moment to get off that track. It takes practice (right effort). And sometimes it works.

One inmate reported once about taking the Three Breath Trip when a judge was berating him in court. He stayed still and, although the judge initially denied the petition before him, he approved it a day later. That never would have happened, the inmate said, if he’d let explode what was in his mind.

At the end of the session that Thursday, the men were energized. I left the room while the guards came with chains to shackle them up and take them back to their cells. ♦



## Buddhism Behind Bars

Some of the dedicated organizations offering Buddhist teachings and meditation practices to inmates in prisons across the U.S.

### Buddhist Association of the United States Prison Programs

The Prison Book Program sends books and materials to inmates; the Prisoner Correspondence Course Program familiarizes inmates with Buddhist concepts through written assignments. [baus.org/en/activities/prison-programs/](http://baus.org/en/activities/prison-programs/)

### Liberation Prison Project

Offers spiritual advice, teachings, books, and materials to over 20,000 inmates interested in exploring, studying, and practicing Buddhism. [liberationprisonproject.org/index2.html](http://liberationprisonproject.org/index2.html)

### North American Vipassana Prison Trust

A 10-day Vipassana meditation program taught at correctional facilities in North America to help inmates of any religion incorporate meditation into their lives. [prison.dhamma.org/en/na/](http://prison.dhamma.org/en/na/)

### Prison Meditation Project

Offers meditation practices, nonviolent communication, and movement practices to inmates in the San Diego area taught by volunteers, detainees, and fellow inmates. [prisonmeditation.org](http://prisonmeditation.org)

### Prison Mindfulness Institute

Provides inmates, staff, and volunteers with nonsectarian training in mindfulness meditation, communication, and conflict resolution. [prisonmindfulness.org/](http://prisonmindfulness.org/)

### Dharma Rains Prison Program

Offers meditation practices and Buddhist teachings to inmates and recently released individuals from state prisons in Oregon. [dharma-rain.org/getting-involved/programs/prison-program/#volunteering](http://dharma-rain.org/getting-involved/programs/prison-program/#volunteering)

### Rangjung Prison Dharma Project

Meditation teachings that aim to hone clarity and insight in challenging environments for inmates at Rikers Island Correctional Facility, New York. [goshir.org/rangjung-prison-dharma-project/](http://goshir.org/rangjung-prison-dharma-project/)



*Fleet Maul of the Prison Mindfulness Institute leads a session at the John J. Moran Prison in Rhode Island.*

### Ratna Peace Initiative Inmate Project

Provides mindfulness meditation instruction in person and through correspondence to inmates in prisons throughout 48 states. [mindfulnesspeaceproject.org/rpi/about-rpi/](http://mindfulnesspeaceproject.org/rpi/about-rpi/)

### True Freedom Program

Organized by the Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation, this letter exchange program connects inmates with pen pals practicing in the Plum Village tradition. [deerparkmonastery.org/general/true-freedom-prison-pen-pal-project/](http://deerparkmonastery.org/general/true-freedom-prison-pen-pal-project/)

### Zen Mountain Monastery Prison Project

Monastics and lay practitioners visit New York States prisons to lead group meditation practices, liturgy, dharma talks, and meditation retreats. [mro.org/smr/nbps/](http://mro.org/smr/nbps/) ♦





# Love and Justice

The Radical Buddhism of Rev. angel Kyodo williams

BY JOHN DEMONT

**S**HE IS A WELL-KNOWN author, activist, and one of American Buddhism's most dynamic and provocative teachers. But once, Rev. angel Kyodo williams was a lonely, bruised little girl living in New York City who would hide her face in a comic book as she walked home from school, avoiding eye contact with those who constantly bullied her.

Comic books allowed williams (who doesn't capitalize her given or surnames) to escape from reality. Her favorite was the super-powered *X-Men*, and among this gang of mutants, she felt a particular affinity for the fierce misanthrope Wolverine.

"He was the most suspicious of power in humans and mutants," says williams. "He was the most immersed in Eastern philosophy. He didn't like people."

That she sees this quality in herself may surprise anyone who encounters the engaging and confident forty-seven-year-old. But so much is unexpected about this maverick Zen teacher, a social visionary who has been described as "the most vocal and intriguing African American Buddhist in America."



*"You make a vow to hear the cries of the world"—williams and other faith leaders prepare to protest health care repeal at the office of Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, where they were arrested for civil disobedience.*

That, for example, she once did the books for Queen Latifah's record label. That at one time Williams owned a Brooklyn cybercafé bankrolled by filmmaker Spike Lee and singer Tracy Chapman. That the second Black woman to be ordained as a teacher in the Zen Peacemakers lineage owns a parrot named Mitra ("friend" in Sanskrit), whom she thinks of as a spiritual friend even though his most dharmic statement is "Do you want to go poo-poo?"

There is also the fact that this queer feminist, who writes in her 2016 book *Radical Dharma* about using love and Buddhist practice as a solution to injustice, also listens to classic hip-hop music, in spite of its often misogynistic lyrics. And that this Zen priest believes she may have an advantage over the real-life Buddha, because he had to leave his palace and go out into the world to learn that life is suffering. "He was shocked by it," says Williams. "But for me suffering was a given. Suffering was my practice."

Growing up in Queens, Williams endured years of physical and emotional abuse by a babysitter. Her next stop, Brooklyn, was worse, as the neighborhood kids did not take kindly to her looks or bookish demeanor. At home, Williams was a latchkey kid whose father and stepmother both worked, making her a vulnerable target for her building's pedophile doorman.

In fairness, Williams—who declines to give her birth name—has some good memories of growing up with her firefighter father in the culturally diverse LeFrak City housing development in Queens. Her sensibilities were strongly shaped by a place where racial and social differences were a given. "Sameness," she says, "was never my gig."

The Buddhist lessons she would one day teach were present throughout her life. At age sixteen Williams went to live with her paternal grandmother, just around the corner from the home of her abusive ex-babysitter. Rather than living in fear, she decided to confront the woman. The day she did, Williams encountered "a human being who was wounded and complex" and who, years earlier, had been far too young to be entrusted with a child's care. "It was a real, dramatic experience of connecting to someone's humanity and being able to see into people's suffering," Williams now says.

Looking back on her childhood, she says, "I wouldn't wish it on anyone else, and I wouldn't trade any of it. Had I not experienced what I experienced, I wouldn't be able to see the world the way that I see it."

REV. ANGEL KYODO WILLIAMS sees the world from a multitude of angles, starting with her viewpoint as a Black, queer woman who had a traumatic childhood. Williams is also an activist whose politicization can be traced back to Freedom Summer

'92—the inaugural event of the Third Wave Direct Action Corporation, created to mobilize women to become more socially and politically involved—where she worked on a cross-country voter registration drive that helped Bill Clinton get elected.

Then there is Williams' perspective as a Buddhist priest. Rather than renounce the world of politics, political engagement, and activism, she has chosen instead to interweave them into her path as a bodhisattva. "You make an actual vow to hear the cries of the world," she says, "to step into the experience of awakening to the suffering of the world, and the desire to bring an end to that suffering."

This past summer, Williams and three other prominent Black clergy were arrested in Washington for protesting the Republicans' attempt to repeal Obamacare, which they viewed as an assault on the poor. Even before that, Williams was a regular visitor to the national capital—marching to Washington the day after Trump's inauguration, leading a busload of Buddhists to the People's Climate March, and joining a group of clerics marching for better health care.

"I'm trying to spend my days bridging the disconnect at some of our country's most intractable and comprehensively impacting intersections," she says. The intersections Williams speaks of include race, the environment, economic disparity, and a host of other intertwined issues that she feels prevent people from reconnecting with themselves, each other, and the planet. "Love and justice are not two," her website proclaims. "Without inner change, there can be no outer change; without collective change, no change matters."

Williams is founder of the Center for Transformative Change, which is dedicated to "bridging the inner and outer lives of social change agents, activists, and allies to create social justice for all."

She is a member of the Auburn Senior Fellows program, a group of prominent faith leaders committed to advancing multi-faith movements for social justice. The Auburn group, *The Washington Post* writes, "is quietly seeking to bring together a 'Religious Left' to counterbalance the decades-old Religious Right by supporting liberal politics with the imprimatur of faith."

She also works with the Green Leadership Trust, which presses for the inclusion of people of color and indigenous people in environmental issues, and Stand, an organization that pressures companies and countries to alter their environmental approaches.

No wonder she calls her life a "mash-up" of the spiritual and the political. "Buddhist thought," she suggests, "has been radicalized by liberatory frameworks that are most clearly articulated in Black, radical, antislavery traditions and in feminism."



REV. ANGEL KYODO WILLIAMS' Buddhist journey began with a single, small book she found in a San Francisco bookstore when she was twenty-three—the classic *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, by the late Shunryu Suzuki. As a child, she had attended Baptist and Episcopalian churches, but Christianity didn't work for her. After briefly investigating Islam, she soured completely on monotheism.

Soon after reading *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Williams started her own "closet" Buddhist practice. Tibetan Buddhism drew her in, particularly the teachings of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, but she found the strain "too white, male, and unwelcoming." Zen, though, was different. "It was minimal. It was down to essence. It was cut away. I didn't want more. I wanted less. It was less about being told than it was questions. And I loved the questions."

Williams' first formal training occurred at the San Francisco Zen Center. When she moved back to New York, Williams heard



Right: Williams and Lama Rod Owens collaborated on the book *Radical Dharma*, a call for Buddhist communities to provide healing for queer folk, people of color, and other marginalized groups.

Below: Williams (center) campaigns for a \$15 minimum wage.







Rev. angel Kyodo williams with her fiancée, Elena Margarita Williams.

PHOTO BY CHRISTINE ALICINO

about Roshi Bernie Glassman and his socially active work at the Greyston Mandala in Yonkers. Connecting social action and Zen appealed to her.

At the Village Zendo in New York City, led by Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, williams discovered something else. "She was queer and there were gay men there. It was like, 'These are my people.'" Eventually williams was ordained as a Zen priest and as a dharma name she chose "Kyodo," which means "way of teaching."

From the beginning, her relationship with what she calls the Western convert Buddhist world was uneasy. "We have a challenge because meditation and mindfulness have largely landed in a privileged community of older white folks," she notes. In reaction, williams wrote her first book, *Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and Grace*, as an invitation to people of color to embrace Zen.

Yet the problem, williams says, was that the convert Buddhist world did not really welcome people of color or, for that matter, the book she wrote raising the issue. "When the teaching itself is becoming some sort of incarceration, you have to liberate yourself from the teaching," she says. "You leave the boat."

So she left the "lineage bound thing" and "started to unfold my own path to follow the truth." This meant forming the New Dharma Community, which focused, among other things, on the needs of people of color practicing the dharma. With Lama Rod Owens and Jasmine Syedullah, williams co-wrote *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation* as a call to transform sanghas and communities so that queer folk, people of color, and members of other marginalized groups could achieve the healing needed to recover from centuries of social injustice. The book is also an exploration of what it is to practice Buddhism in a society where African Americans are routinely killed by police and incarcerated in vast numbers.

But though williams thought she was done with Zen, Zen

was not done with her. A surge in interest in Buddhism by queer and Black folk and other previously excluded groups led williams to reconnect with her original Zen lineage.

Williams is quick to note that this doesn't mean that she thinks all is right in the American Buddhist world, any more than she thinks all is right with America. The road to liberation is what mainly preoccupies her. If williams has a central lesson for the world, it's that suffering is the doorway to liberation, and that "by being honestly willing to engage with our suffering, we find our connection to the suffering of the world."

The trouble with the American Buddhist world, in her view, is that its older, white, male, middle-class adherents find it difficult to connect with the suffering that exists beyond their privileged circumstances.

"I'm obsessed with the question of how we shift that," williams has said, adding, "There's something in the way we are practicing Buddhism that actually seems to make us more insulated. Even this practice, which is supposed to be about how we relate to the world and to the people around us, becomes hyper-individualized."

Williams says now is the time to cut through this. "We can't let such a powerful tool as meditation be limited by people's personal circumstances," she states. "We don't have the numbers to move this country toward greater social justice if the only driving force is whether or not people are feeling the pain personally."

Though Buddhism is williams' practice, when she speaks to people in the African-American community, she doesn't use traditional terms like the four noble truths. "With all due respect, I don't care about Buddhism. I'm not nation-building around Buddhism," she has said. "I just want it to work. I want people to be liberated."

Instead, williams exhorts the Black community to take the suffering that "has contributed to our great compassion and resilience and beauty" and relate to it in a way that "frees them to be truly who they are." By doing this, she says, Black Americans gain "access to the full embodied joy and happiness that we are entitled to, not because we are Black, but because we are humans."

SINCE SHE FOCUSES HER ATTENTION on whatever moves her, williams' life is peripatetic. Home is Berkeley, where she lives with her fiancée, Elena Margarita Williams. She also spends a few months of the year in New York and the rest of the time is on the road—teaching, speaking, and spreading wisdom any way she can.

Williams acknowledges it's not a great time to be an American, let alone a Black, queer Buddhist woman. "Is it the land of the free and home of the brave for everyone, or is it the land of the free and home of the brave if immigrants know their place and 'true' Amer-



icans get what they want?” she asks. But williams is determined to keep walking her path, which is defined by her belief that “our inner lives and social lives are interwoven and interconnected, not just in and of ourselves, but to one another.”

It is a path that requires endurance. Wherever she is, williams rises at quarter to six and does her yoga routine and seated meditation practice. “I feel like I have a living meditation,” she says. “I do formally practice, but I don’t measure my practice anymore in terms of minutes.” Then, she indulges in another important daily ritual, making a great cup of coffee, a holdover from her time at Kokobar, the first Black-owned internet café that she co-owned with Alice Walker’s activist daughter Rebecca Walker.

An avid reader, williams devours *The New York Times* and publications and books steeped in political subject matter—her future reading list includes *Hillbilly Elegy: Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*, which seeks to explain the disaffected rural white male voters who carried Donald Trump to the presidency.

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Below: Teaching at Brooklyn Zen Center: “Buddhism has been radicalized by liberatory frameworks in Black, radical, anti-slavery traditions and in feminism.”

“A lot of that disaffection comes from the entitlement that comes with whiteness,” williams says. “They are entitled to this country and everyone else is a user, a stealer, a taker, who doesn’t know their place.”

Yet every moment of williams’ life isn’t devoted to high-minded pursuits. She sometimes finds time for the occasional popcorn movie, like *Logan*, a recent instalment in the *X-Men* franchise and a throwback to the comic book reading of her youth. In it, a weary Wolverine—her old favorite—has his plans to hide from the outside world upended when a young mutant arrives needing protection, forcing the cranky loner to fight one last triumphant battle against the forces of evil.

“Who is she?” Wolverine asks another character about the young mutant. “She’s like you. She’s very much like you,” the other character tells Wolverine. As someone who grew up feeling “other” and has made it her life’s work to unseat the systems that create separation, williams is a fan of this movie. “It was terrific,” williams says over the telephone, her faraway voice sounding, for one brief moment, like an eight-year-old girl’s again. ♦

PHOTO BY A. JESSE JIRYU DAVIS









Left: Expert meditator Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche is fitted with 256 thin wires to measure his brain waves while he meditates.

# How Meditation Changes Your Brain —and Your Life

When neuroscientists tested expert meditators, they discovered something surprising: The effect of Buddhist meditation isn't just momentary; it can alter deep-seated traits in our brain patterns and character. **DANIEL GOLEMAN** and **RICHARD DAVIDSON** tell the story of this revolutionary breakthrough in our understanding of how meditation works.

**O**NE COOL SEPTEMBER MORNING in 2002 a Tibetan monk arrived at the Madison, Wisconsin airport. His journey had started 7,000 miles away at a monastery atop a hill on the fringe of Kathmandu, Nepal. The trip took 18 hours in the air over three days, and crossed ten time zones.

Richie Davidson had met the monk briefly at the 1995 Mind and Life meeting on destructive emotions in Dharamsala, but had forgotten what he looked like. Still, it was easy to pick him out from the crowd. He was the only shaven-headed man wearing gold-and-crimson robes in the Dane County Regional Airport. His name was Mingyur Rinpoche and he had traveled all this way to have his brain assayed while he meditated.

After a night's rest, Richie brought Mingyur to the EEG room at the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, where brain waves are measured with what looks like a surrealist art piece: a shower cap extruding a spaghetti of wires. This specially designed cap holds 256 thin wires in place, each leading to a sensor pasted to a precise location on the scalp. A tight connection between the sensor and the scalp makes all the difference between recording usable data about the brain's electrical activity and having the electrode simply be an antenna for noise.

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*Psychologist DANIEL GOLEMAN is the bestselling author of Emotional Intelligence and a leader in the dialogue between Buddhism and science. Neuroscientist RICHARD DAVIDSON is founder of the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he has pioneered the study of how meditation practices affect the brain. He was recently elected to the National Academy of Medicine.*



PHOTO BY JEFF MILLER, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

*Twenty-one Buddhist yogis have been tested in Davidson's lab. Here he explains how brain images are displayed to the Dalai Lama, who has long advocated the scientific study of meditation.*

As Mingyur was told when a lab technician began pasting sensors to his scalp, ensuring a tight connection for each and placing them in their exact spot takes no more than fifteen minutes. But Mingyur, a shaven-headed monk, offered up a bald head, and it turns out such continually exposed skin is more thickened and calloused than one protected by hair. To make the crucial electrode-to-scalp connection tight enough to yield viable readings through thicker skin ended up taking much longer than usual.

Most people who come into the lab get impatient, if not irritated, by such delays. But Mingyur was not in the least perturbed, which calmed the nervous lab technician—and all those looking on—with the feeling anything that happened would be okay with him. That was the first inkling of Mingyur's ease of being, a palpable sense of relaxed readiness for whatever life might bring. The lasting impression Mingyur conveyed was of endless patience, and a gentle quality of kindness.

After spending what seemed like an eternity ensuring that the sensors had good contact with the scalp, the experiment was finally ready to begin. A precise analysis of something as squishy as, say, compassion demands an exacting protocol, one that can detect that mental state's specific pattern of brain activity amidst the cacophony of the electrical storm from everything else going on. The protocol had Mingyur alternate between

one minute of meditation on compassion and thirty seconds of a neutral resting period. To ensure confidence that any effect detected was reliable rather than a random finding, he would have to do this four times in rapid succession.

From the start Richie had grave doubts about whether this could work. Those on the lab team who meditated, Richie among them, all knew it takes time just to settle the mind, often considerably longer than a few minutes. It was inconceivable, they thought, that even someone like Mingyur would be able to enter these states instantaneously, and not need much time to reach inner quiet.

Richie was fortunate that Buddhist scholar John Dunne—a rare combination of scientific interests, humanities expertise, and fluency in Tibetan—volunteered to translate. John delivered precisely timed instructions to Mingyur signaling him to start a compassion meditation, and then after sixty seconds another cue for thirty seconds of his mental resting state, and so on for three more cycles.

Just as Mingyur began the meditation, there was a sudden, huge burst of electrical activity on the computer monitors displaying the signals from his brain. Everyone assumed this meant he had moved; such movement artifacts are a common problem in research with EEG, which registers as wave patterns readings of electrical activity at the top of the brain. Any



motion that tugs the sensor—a leg shifting, a tilt of the head—gets amplified in those readings into a huge spike that looks like a brain wave but has to be filtered out for a clean analysis.

Oddly, this burst seemed to last the entire period of the compassion meditation and so far as anyone could see Mingyur had not moved an iota. What's more, the giant spikes diminished but did not disappear as he went into the mental rest period, again with no visible shift in his body.

The four experimenters in the control room team watched, transfixed, while the next meditation period was announced. As John Dunne translated the next instruction to meditate into Tibetan, the team studied the monitors in silence, glancing back and forth from the brain wave monitor to the video trained on Mingyur.

Instantly the same dramatic burst of electrical signal occurred. Again Mingyur was perfectly still, with no visible change in his body's position from the rest to the meditation period. Yet the monitor still displayed that same brain wave surge. As this pattern repeated each time he was instructed to generate compassion, the team looked at one another in astonished silence, nearly jumping off their seats in excitement.

The lab team knew at that moment they were witnessing something profound, something that had never before been observed in the laboratory. None could predict what this would lead to, but everyone sensed this was a critical inflection point in neuroscience history.

The news of that session created a scientific stir. As of this writing, the journal article reporting these findings has been cited more than 1,100 times in the world's scientific literature. Science has paid attention.

The next stunner came when Mingyur went through another batch of tests, this with fMRI, which renders what amounts to a 3D video of brain activity. The fMRI gives science a lens that complements the EEG, which tracks the brain's electrical activity. The EEG readings are more precise in time, the fMRI more accurate in neural locations.

An EEG does not reveal what's happening deeper in the brain, let alone show where in the brain the changes occur—that spatial precision comes from the fMRI, which maps the regions where brain activity occurs in minute detail. On the other hand, fMRI, though spatially exacting, tracks the timing of changes over one or two seconds, far slower than EEG.

While his brain was probed by the fMRI, Mingyur followed the cue to engage compassion. Once again the minds of Richie and the others watching in the control room felt as though they had stopped. The reason: Mingyur's brain's circuitry for empathy (which typically fires a bit during this mental exercise) rose to an activity level 700 to 800 times greater than it had been during the rest period just before.

Such an extreme increase befuddles science; the intensity with which those states were activated in Mingyur's brain exceeds any we have seen in studies of "normal" people. The



*When Davidson and a colleague looked at the numbers, they exchanged just one word: "Amazing!" They had stumbled on the holy grail: a neural signature showing an enduring transformation.*

closest resemblance is for epileptic seizures, but those episodes last brief seconds, not a full minute. And besides, brains are seized by seizures, in contrast to Mingyur's display of intentional control of his brain activity.

While Mingyur's visit to Madison had yielded jaw-dropping results, he was not alone. His remarkable neural performance was part of a larger story, a one-of-a-kind brain research program that has harvested data from these world-class meditation experts.

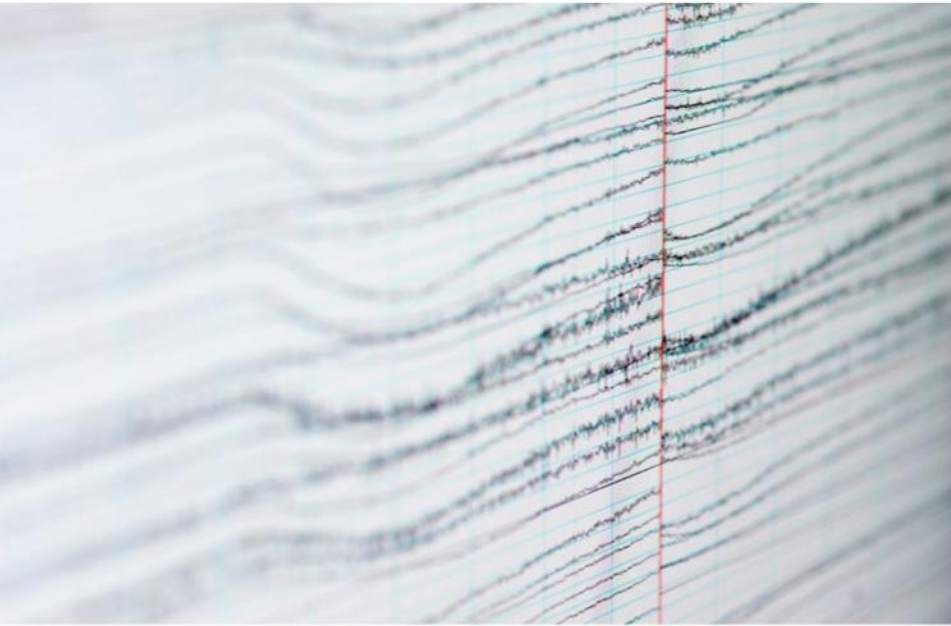
Over the years in Richie's lab, 21 Buddhist yogis have come to be formally tested. They were at the height of this inner art, having racked up lifetime meditation hours ranging from 12,000 to Mingyur's 62,000.

Each of these yogis completed at least one three-year retreat, during which they meditated in formal practice a minimum of eight hours per day for three continuous years—actually, for three years, three months, and three days. That equates, in a conservative estimate, to about 9,500 hours per retreat.

All have undergone the same scientific protocol, those four one-minute cycles of three kinds of meditation—which has yielded a mountain of metrics. The lab's team spent months and months analyzing the dramatic changes they saw during those short minutes in these highly seasoned practitioners.

Like Mingyur, they entered the specified meditative states at will, each one marked by a distinctive neural signature. As with Mingyur these adepts have shown remarkable mental dexterity, with striking ease instantly mobilizing these states: generating feelings of compassion; the spacious equanimity of complete openness to whatever occurs; or a laser-tight, unbreakable focus.

They entered and left these difficult-to-achieve levels of awareness within split seconds. These shifts in awareness were accompanied by equally pronounced shifts in measurable brain



*Data recorded during an electroencephalography (EEG) test of Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard while he was meditating. Experts tested have logged between 12,000 and 62,000 hours of meditation.*

PHOTO BY JEFF MILLER, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

activity. Such a feat of collective mental gymnastics has never been seen by science before.

Preparing the raw data on the yogis for sifting by sophisticated statistical programs has demanded painstaking work. Just teasing out the differences between the yogis' resting state and their brain activity during meditation was a gargantuan computing task. So it took Richie and his colleague Antoine Lutz of the Lyon Neuroscience Research Center quite a while to stumble upon a pattern hiding in that data flood, empirical evidence that got lost amid the excitement about the yogis' prowess in altering their brain activity during meditative states. In fact, the missed pattern surfaced only as an afterthought during a less hectic moment, months later when the analytic team sifted through the data again.

All along the statistical team had focused on temporary state effects by computing the difference between a yogi's baseline brain activity and that produced during the one-minute meditation periods. Richie was reviewing the numbers with Antoine and wanted a routine check to ensure that the initial baseline EEG readings—those taken at rest, before the experiment began—were the same in a group of control volunteers who tried the identical meditations the yogis were doing. He asked to see just this baseline data by itself.

When Richie and Antoine sat down to review what the computers had just crunched, they looked at the numbers and then looked at one another. They knew exactly what they were seeing and exchanged just one word: "Amazing!"

All the yogis had elevated gamma oscillations, not just during the meditation practice periods for open presence and compas-

sion but also during the very first measurement, before any meditation was performed. This electrifying data was in the EEG frequency known as "high-amplitude" gamma, the strongest, most intense form. These waves lasted the full minute of the baseline measurement, before they started the meditation.

This was the very EEG wave that Mingyur had displayed in that surprising surge during both open presence and compassion. And now Richie's team saw that same unusual brain pattern in all the yogis as a standard feature of their everyday neural activity. In other words, Richie and Antoine had stumbled upon the holy grail: a neural signature showing an enduring transformation.

There are four main types of EEG waves, classed by their frequency (technically, measured in Hertz). Delta, the slowest wave, oscillates between one and four cycles per second, and occurs mainly during deep sleep; theta, the next slowest, can signify drowsiness; alpha

occurs when we are doing little thinking and indicates relaxation; and beta, the fastest, accompanies thinking, alertness, or concentration.

Gamma, the very fastest brain wave, occurs during moments when differing brain regions fire in harmony, like moments of insight when different elements of a mental puzzle "click" together. To get a sense of this "click," try this: What single word can turn each of these into a compound word: sauce, pine, crab?

The instant your mind comes up with the answer, your brain signal momentarily produces that distinctive gamma flare. You also elicit a short-lived gamma wave when, for instance, you imagine biting into a ripe, juicy peach and your brain draws together memories stored in different regions of the occipital, temporal, somatosensory, insular, and olfactory cortices to suddenly mesh the sight, smells, taste, feel, and sound of that bite into a single experience. For that quick moment the gamma waves from each of these cortical regions oscillate in perfect synchrony. Ordinarily gamma waves from, say, a creative insight, last no longer than a fifth of a second—not the full minute seen in the yogis.

Anyone's EEG will show distinctive gamma waves for short moments from time to time. Ordinarily, during a waking state we exhibit a mixture of different brain waves that wax and wane at different frequencies. These brain oscillations reflect complex mental activity, like information processing, and their various frequencies correspond to broadly different functions. The location of these oscillations varies among brain regions; we can display alpha in one cortical location and gamma in another.

In the yogis, gamma oscillations are a far more prominent feature of their brain activity than in other people. Our usual





*Adepts showed remarkable mental dexterity, entering and leaving difficult-to-achieve levels of awareness within split seconds, accompanied by equally pronounced shifts in measurable brain activity. Such feats of collective mental gymnastics had never been seen by science before.*

gamma waves are not nearly as strong as that seen by Richie's team in yogis like Mingyur. The contrast between the yogis and controls in the intensity of gamma was immense: on average the yogis had 25 times greater amplitude gamma oscillations during baseline compared with the control group.

We can only conjecture about what state of consciousness this reflects: yogis like Mingyur seem to experience an ongoing state of open, rich awareness during their daily lives, not just when they meditate. The yogis themselves have described it as a spaciousness and vastness in their experience, as if all their senses were wide open to the full, rich panorama of experience. Or, as a fourteenth century Tibetan text describes it,

*"...a state of bare, transparent awareness;  
Effortless and brilliantly vivid, a state of relaxed, rootless wisdom;  
Fixation free and crystal clear, a state without the slightest reference point;  
Spacious empty clarity, a state wide open and unconfined;  
the senses unfettered..."*

The gamma brain state Richie and Antoine discovered was more than unusual, it was unprecedented—a wow! No brain lab had ever before seen gamma oscillations that persist for

minutes rather than split seconds, are so strong, and are in synchrony across widespread regions of the brain.

Astonishingly, this sustained, brain-entraining gamma pattern goes on even while seasoned meditators are asleep—as was found by Richie's team in other research with long-term vipassana meditators who have an average lifetime practice of about 10,000 hours. These gamma oscillations continuing during deep sleep are, again, something never seen before and seem to reflect a residual quality of awareness that persists day and night.

The yogis' pattern of gamma oscillation contrasts with how, ordinarily, these waves occur only briefly, and in an isolated neural location. The adepts had a sharply heightened level of gamma waves oscillating in synchrony across their brain, independent of any particular mental act. Unheard of.

Richie and Antoine were seeing for the first time a neural echo of the enduring transformations that years of meditation practice etch on the brain. Here was the treasure, hidden in the data all along: a genuine altered trait. ♦

*From Altered Traits: What Science Reveals About How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body by Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson, published by Avery, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.*



# Mind & Brain:

THE DALAI LAMA on why we need the inner science of subjective consciousness that meditators specialize in as well as the study of objective phenomena we normally think of as science.

**W**ESTERN PHILOSOPHY and science have, on the whole, attempted to understand consciousness solely in terms of the functions of the brain. This approach effectively grounds the nature and existence of the mind in matter, in an ontologically reductionist manner. Some view the brain in terms of a computational model, comparing it to



# The Two Sciences

artificial intelligence; others attempt an evolutionary model for the emergence of the various aspects of consciousness.

In modern neuroscience, there is a deep question about whether the mind and consciousness are any more than simply operations of the brain, whether sensations and emotions are more than chemical reactions. To what extent does the world of subjective experience depend on the hardware and working order of the brain? It must to some significant extent, but does it do so entirely? What are the necessary and sufficient causes for the emergence of subjective mental experiences?

Many scientists, especially those in the discipline of neurobiology, assume that consciousness is a special kind of physical process that arises through the structure and dynamics of the brain. I vividly



remember a discussion I had with some eminent neuroscientists at an American medical school. After they kindly showed me the latest scientific instruments to probe ever deeper into the human brain, such as fMRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and ECG (electrocardiograph), and let me view a brain operation in progress (with the family's permission), we sat down to have a conversation on the current scientific understanding of consciousness. I said to one of the scientists: "It seems very evident that due to changes in the chemical processes of the brain, many of our subjective experiences like perception and sensation occur. Can one envision the reversal of this causal process? Can one postulate that pure thought itself could affect a change in the chemical processes of the brain?" I was asking whether, conceptually at least, we could allow the possibility of both upward and downward causation.

**The contemplative method is an empirical use of introspection sustained by robust testing. All experiences must be verifiable through repetition by the same practitioner and through other individuals being able to attain the same state by the same practice.**

The scientist's response was quite surprising. He said that since all mental states arise from physical states, it is not possible for downward causation to occur. Although, out of politeness, I did not respond at the time, I thought then and still think that there is as yet no scientific basis for such a categorical claim. The view that all mental processes are necessarily physical processes is a metaphysical assumption, not a scientific fact. I feel that, in the spirit of scientific inquiry, it is critical that we allow the question to remain open, and not conflate our assumptions with empirical fact.

A crucial point about the study of consciousness, as opposed to the study of the physical world, relates to the personal perspective. In examining the physical world, leaving aside the problematic issue of quantum mechanics, we are dealing with phenomena that lend themselves well to the dominant scientific method of the objective, third-person method of inquiry. On the whole, we have a sense that a scientific explanation of the physical world does not exclude the key elements of the field being described. In the realm of subjective experiences, however, the story is completely different. When we listen to a purely third-person, "objective" account of mental states, whether it is a cognitive psychological theory, a neurobiological account, or an evolutionary theory, we feel that a crucial

dimension of the subject has been left out. I am referring to the phenomenological aspect of mental phenomena, namely the subjective experience of the individual.

Even from this brief discussion, it is, I think, clear that the third-person method—which has served science so well in so many areas—is inadequate to the explanation of consciousness. What is required, if science is successfully to probe the nature of consciousness, is nothing short of a paradigm shift. That is, the third-person perspective, which can measure phenomena from the point of view of an independent observer, must be integrated with a first-person perspective, which will allow the incorporation of subjectivity and the qualities that characterize the experience of consciousness. I am suggesting the need for the method of our investigation to be appropriate to the object of inquiry. Given that one of the primary characteristics of consciousness is its subjective and experiential nature, any systematic study of it must adopt a method that will give access to the dimensions of subjectivity and experience.

A comprehensive scientific study of consciousness must therefore embrace both third-person and first-person methods: it cannot ignore the phenomenological reality of subjective experience but must observe all the rules of scientific rigor. So the critical question is this: can we envision a scientific methodology for the study of consciousness whereby a robust first-person method, which does full justice to the phenomenology of experience, can be combined with the objectivist perspective of the study of the brain?

Here I feel a close collaboration between modern science and the contemplative traditions, such as Buddhism, could prove beneficial. Buddhism has a long history of investigation into the nature of mind and its various aspects—this is effectively what Buddhist meditation and its critical analysis constitute. Unlike that of modern science, Buddhism's approach has been primarily from first-person experience. The contemplative method, as developed by Buddhism, is an empirical use of introspection, sustained by rigorous training in technique and robust testing of the reliability of experience. All meditatively valid subjective experiences must be verifiable both through repetition by the same practitioner and through other individuals being able to attain the same state by the same practice. If they are thus verified, such states may be taken to be universal, at any rate for human beings.

The Buddhist understanding of mind is primarily derived from empirical observations grounded in the phenomenology of experience, which includes the contemplative techniques of meditation. Working models of the mind and its various aspects and functions are generated on this basis; they are then subjected to sustained critical and philosophical analysis and empirical testing through both meditation and mindful observation. If we want to observe how our perceptions work, we





PHOTO BY GAVIN SMITH / MILLENNIUM IMAGES, UK

may train our mind in attention and learn to observe the rising and falling of perceptual processes on a moment-by-moment basis. This is an empirical process that results in firsthand knowledge of a certain aspect of how the mind works. We may use that knowledge to reduce the effects of emotions such as anger or resentment (indeed, meditation practitioners in search of overcoming mental affliction would wish to do this), but my point here is that this process offers a first-person empirical method with relation to the mind.

What occurs during meditative contemplation in a tradition such as Buddhism and what occurs during introspection in the ordinary sense are two quite different things. In the context of Buddhism, introspection is employed with careful attention to the dangers of extreme subjectivism—such as fantasies and delusions—and with the cultivation of a disciplined state of mind. Refinement of attention, in terms of stability and vividness, is a crucial preparation for the utilization of rigorous introspection, much as a telescope is crucial for the detailed examination of celestial phenomena. Just as in science, there is a series of protocols and procedures that contemplative introspection must employ. Upon entering a laboratory, someone untrained in science would not know what to look at and would have no capacity to recognize when something is found; in the same way, an untrained mind will have no ability to apply the introspective

focus on a chosen object and will fail to recognize when processes of the mind show themselves. Just like a trained scientist, a disciplined mind will have the knowledge of what to look for and the ability to recognize when discoveries are made.

It may well be that the question of whether consciousness can ultimately be reduced to physical processes, or whether our subjective experiences are nonmaterial features of the world, will remain a matter of philosophical choice. The key issue here is to bracket out the metaphysical questions about mind and matter, and to explore together how to understand scientifically the various modalities of the mind. I believe that it is possible for Buddhism and modern science to engage in collaborative research in the understanding of consciousness while leaving aside the philosophical question of whether consciousness is ultimately physical. By bringing together these two modes of inquiry, both disciplines may be enriched. Such collaborative study will contribute not only greater human understanding of consciousness but a better understanding of the dynamics of the human mind and its relation to suffering. This is a precious gateway into the alleviation of suffering, which I believe to be our principal task on this earth. ♦

*From The Universe in a Single Atom, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, published by Morgan Road Books, a division of Random House, Inc.*





# The Science of Meditation

## What We Know and What We Don't

While people have believed for thousands of years that meditation works, the search for scientific proof is just beginning. The team at Greater Good Science Center assesses the current state of the evidence—what we do, don't, and might know.

BY JEREMY ADAM SMITH,  
HOORIA JAZAIERI, JILL  
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*This article was largely adapted from content in Greater Good Magazine ([greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu)), which covers the science of a meaningful life. Jeremy Adam Smith edits Greater Good with Jill Suttie and Kira Newman. Hooria Jazaieri, LMFT, is a former graduate research fellow with the Greater Good Science Center.*

**D**URING THE PAST TWO decades, we've discovered a lot about mindfulness. Specifically, there have been many studies of meditation, which is one of the best ways to cultivate moment-to-moment awareness of ourselves and our environment. But sometimes, journalists and even scientists (who should know better) overstate the benefits.

Indeed, the science behind mindfulness meditation has often suffered from poor study designs, lack of funding, and small effect sizes. As a result, there is still a lot we don't understand about mindfulness and

meditation. Here's a rundown of questions that seem fairly settled, for the time being, and questions researchers are still exploring.

### **Meditation almost certainly does sharpen your attention.**

It's not surprising that meditation would affect attention, since many practices focus on this very skill. And, in fact, researchers have found that meditation helps to combat habituation—the tendency to stop paying attention to new information in our environment. Other studies have

found that mindfulness meditation can reduce mind-wandering and improve our ability to solve problems.

There's more good news: studies have shown that improved attention seems to last up to five years after mindfulness training, again suggesting trait-like changes are possible. Do these benefits apply to people with attention-deficit disorders, and could meditation possibly supplant drugs like Adderall? We can't yet say for sure. While there have been some promising small-scale studies, especially with adults, we need larger randomized controlled trials to understand how meditation might mix with other treatments to help both kids and adults manage attention deficits.

### **Long-term, consistent meditation does seem to increase resiliency to stress.**

Note that we're not saying it necessarily reduces physiological and psychological reactions to threats and obstacles. But studies to date do suggest that meditation helps mind and body bounce back from stress and stressful situations.

For example, practicing meditation lessens the inflammatory response in people exposed to psychological stressors, particularly for long-term meditators. According to neuroscience research, mindfulness practices dampen activity in our amygdala and increase the connections between the amygdala and

prefrontal cortex. Both of these parts of the brain help us to be less reactive to stressors and to recover better from stress when we experience it.

As Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson write in their new book, *Altered Traits*, "These changes are trait-like: they appear not simply during the explicit instruction to perceive the stressful stimuli mindfully, but even in the 'baseline' state" for longer-term meditators, which supports the possibility that mindfulness changes our ability to handle stress in a better, more sustainable way.

### **Meditation does appear to increase compassion. It also makes our compassion more effective.**

While we may espouse compassionate attitudes, we can also suffer when we see others suffering, which can create a state of paralysis or withdrawal.

Many well-designed studies have shown that practicing loving-kindness meditation for others increases our willingness to take action to relieve suffering. It appears to do this by lessening amygdala activity in the presence of suffering, while also activating circuits in the brain that are connected to good feelings and love.

For longtime meditators, activity in the "default network"—the part of our brains that, when not busy with focused activity, ruminates on thoughts, feelings, and experiences—quiets down, suggesting less rumination about ourselves and our place in the world.

### **Meditation appears to improve mental health—but not necessarily more than other steps you can take.**

Early research suggested that mindfulness meditation had a dramatic impact on our mental health. But as the number





of studies has grown, so has scientific skepticism about these initial claims.

For example, a 2014 meta-analysis published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* examined 47 randomized controlled trials of mindfulness meditation programs, which included a total of 3,515 participants. They found that meditation programs resulted only in small to moderate reductions in anxiety and depression. Furthermore, there was also low, insufficient, or no evidence of meditation programs' effect on positive mood and feelings and substance use (as well as physical self-care like eating habits and sleep).

According to the authors, meditation programs were not shown to be more beneficial than active treatments—such as exercise, therapy, or taking prescription drugs—on any outcomes of interest.

The upshot? Meditation is generally good for your well-being, yes, but so far it doesn't appear to be actually better than many other steps you can take to stay healthy and happy. It should definitely be considered an adjunct to, not a replacement for, other kinds of treatment for mental conditions like bipolar disorder.

### **Mindfulness could have a positive impact on your relationships.**

There are many, many studies that find a positive link between mindfulness and relationship quality, which is probably a byproduct of the effects we've already described.

For example, in one 2016 study, researchers measured mindfulness of 88 couples. Then they took cortisol levels in each couple before and after they discussed a conflict in their relationship. Unsurprisingly, cortisol levels spiked during the discussion, a sign of high stress. But levels in the most mindful people—both men and women—were quicker to return to normal after the conflict ended, suggesting they were keeping their cool.

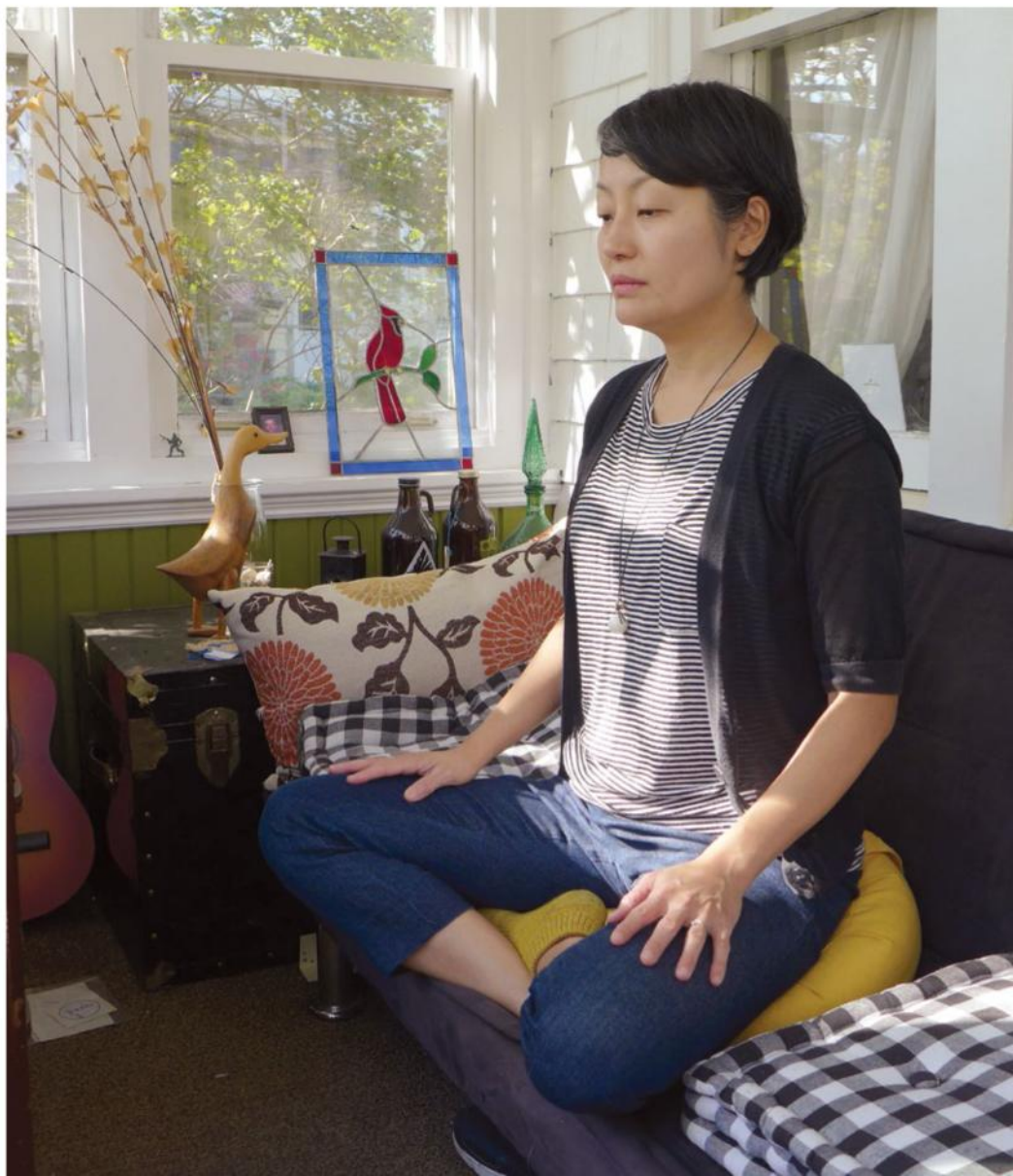
This result is echoed in many studies of mindfulness in romantic relationships from beginning to the very end—in fact, there are quite a few studies which find that mindfulness makes breakup and divorce easier.

Mindfulness is also linked to better relationships with your kids. Studies have found that mindfulness practice can lessen stress, depression, and anxiety in parents of preschoolers and children with disabilities. Mindful parenting is also linked to more positive behavior in kids. A small 2016 pilot study used neural imaging to see how mindfulness practice changes the brains of parents—and then asked the kids about the quality of their parenting. The results suggest that

mindfulness practice seemed to activate the part of the brain involved in empathy and emotional regulation (the left anterior insula/inferior frontal gyrus) and that the children of parents who showed the most activation perceived the greatest improvement in the parent-child relationship. We must remember, however, that these studies are often very small, and the researchers themselves says results are very tentative.

### **Mindfulness seems to reduce many kinds of bias.**

We are seeing more and more studies suggesting that practicing mindfulness can reduce psychological bias.



For example, one study found that a brief loving-kindness meditation reduced prejudice toward homeless people, while another found that a brief mindfulness training decreased unconscious bias against black people and elderly people. In a study by Adam Lueke and colleagues, white participants who received a brief mindfulness training demonstrated less biased behavior (not just attitudes) toward black participants in a trust game.

However, social bias isn't the only kind of mental bias mindfulness appears to reduce. For example, several studies convincingly show that mindfulness probably reduces sunk-cost bias, which is our tendency to stay invested in a losing proposition.

Mindfulness also seems to reduce our natural tendency to focus on the negative things in life. In one study, participants reported on their general mindfulness levels, then briefly viewed photos that induced strong positive emotion (like photos of babies), strong negative emotion (like photos of people in pain), or neither, while having their brains scanned. More mindful participants were less reactive to negative photos and showed higher indications of positive feeling when seeing the positive photos. According to the authors, this supports the contention that mindfulness decreases the negativity bias, something other studies support, too.

## **Meditation does have an impact on physical health—but it's modest.**

Many claims have been made about mindfulness and physical health, but sometimes these claims are hard to substantiate or may be mixed up with other effects. That said, there is some good evidence that meditation affects physiological indices of health.

For example, practicing meditation lessens the inflammatory response in people exposed to psychological stressors, particularly among long-term meditators. Also, meditators seem to have increased activity of telomerase, an enzyme implicated in longer cell life and, therefore, longevity.

But there's a catch. "The differences found [between meditators and non-meditators] could be due to factors like education or exercise, each of which has its own buffering effect on brains," write Goleman and Davidson in *Altered Traits*. "Then there's self-selection: perhaps people with the brain changes reported in these studies choose to stick with meditation while others do not." In other words, we should use caution when championing results.

## **Meditation isn't good for everyone all the time.**

Some seem to believe mindfulness practice will invariably induce a sense of peace and calm. While this can be the experience for many, it is not the experience for all. At times, sitting quietly with oneself can be a difficult—even painful—experience. For individuals who have experienced some sort of trauma, sitting and meditating can at times bring up recent or sometimes decades-old painful memories and experiences that they may not be prepared to confront.

In a new study published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, Jared Lindahl and colleagues interviewed 100 meditators about "challenging" experiences. They found





that many of them experienced fear, anxiety, panic, numbness, or extreme sensitivity to light and sound that they attributed to meditation. Crucially, they found that these experiences weren't restricted to people with "pre-existing" conditions, like trauma or mental illness; they could happen to anyone at any time.

In this new domain of research, there is still a lot we do not understand. Future research needs to explore the relationship between case histories and meditation experiences, how the type of practice relates to challenging experiences, and the influence of other factors like social support.

### What kind of meditation is right for you? That depends.

"Mindfulness" is a big umbrella that covers many different kinds of practice. A 2016 study compared four different types of meditation, and found that they each have their own unique benefits.

During *body scan*, for example, participants saw the biggest increases in how aware they were of their bodies (unsurprisingly) and the sharpest decline in the number of thoughts they were having, particularly negative thoughts and thoughts related to the past and future. *Loving-kindness meditation* led to the greatest boost in their feelings of warmth and positive thoughts about others. Meanwhile, *observing-thought meditation* seemed to increase participants' awareness of their thoughts the most. Previous research also suggests that observing-thought meditation has an advantage in reducing our judgmental attitude toward others.

Taken together, these and other studies suggest that if you're tackling a specific issue—say, feeling disconnected from your body—then you can choose a practice aimed at helping that issue, like the body scan. Loving-kindness might help in conflict with others, while observing-thought meditation can help break rumination.



PHOTO COURTESY OF IMS / EVAN HENRITZE

"The type of meditation matters," explain postdoctoral researcher Bethany Kok and professor Tania Singer. "Each practice appears to create a distinct mental environment, the long-term consequences of which are only beginning to be explored."

### How much meditation is enough? That also depends.

This isn't the answer most people want to hear. Many of us are looking for a medically prescriptive response (e.g., three times a week for 45-60 minutes), but the best guide might be this old Zen saying: "You should sit in meditation for twenty minutes every day—unless you're too busy. Then you should sit for an hour."

To date, empirical research has yet to

arrive at a consensus about how much is "enough." Aside from the raw number of minutes, other factors may interact to influence the benefits of mindfulness practice: the type (e.g., formal sitting meditation practice vs. informal meditation practices, mindfulness vs. compassion), the frequency (multiple times a day vs. multiple times a week), and the quality (sitting and actually doing the practice vs. doing the practice "on the go").

While it's possible that in the next 10-15 years we will see a CDC-style recommendation regarding meditation practice, to date, the empirical data on the topic are still inconclusive. Our recommendation? Try out different durations, types, and frequencies of meditation and jot down how you feel before and after the practice—and see what seems to work for you. ♦



# Why America Needs Love

We don't have to agree, but we don't have to be enemies. CNN's **VAN JONES** and Buddhist teacher **LAMA TSOMO** on why love lays the ground for real dialogue and change.

**Lion's Roar:** How would you assess the state of love in American society today?

**Lama Tsomo:** This moment in time is filled with all kinds of extremes, from environmental politics to the economy. It is bringing out both a lot of love and a lot of othering. Van and I have talked a lot about the temptation to fall into “us” versus “them”—how easy it is to feel part of a group by othering somebody else, how tempting it is to fall into that when we're afraid. Yet this time is calling us to move past that urge into loving everyone and finding solutions for the sake of everyone.

**Van Jones:** It definitely feels like we are in a spiral of tribalism. What's interesting about tribalism is that love is present—but it's narrowly focused. Trump voters feel that they've been left out, laughed at, or pushed aside by an emerging American majority that doesn't look like them and doesn't speak the same way they do. There's an upsurge of love for self, but with a Trump-style wall around it.

Similarly, other groups are also coming into a form of self-love or self-expression, whether we're talking about transgender people, people with immigrant backgrounds, or young African Americans marching against police brutality. They're expressing a love for themselves, and for people who are like them. But that love doesn't always extend to people on the other side of the police line. That's understandable, because of the long history of

the system abusing its power. And yet if neither side reaches out, we get stalemate at best—or a new kind of civil war at worst.

The challenge is to get people to extend the boundaries of the love they feel without giving up pride in who they are, where they're from, or what their faith is. It's about creating as many opportunities as possible for people to rediscover those connections.

**Can we find a love that bridges differences without sweeping very real differences of opinion and policies under the carpet?**

**Van Jones:** In a democracy we get to disagree, which is called freedom. That's the point. In a dictatorship you can't disagree. But there's a kind of totalitarianism on both sides today.

I think liberals in the United States have an almost colonial attitude toward the red states, like Southerners are just unwashed heathens. Liberals too often act like red state voters need to be conquered or converted to the NPR religion, and then all will be well with the republic. Similarly on the right wing, everything about liberals is seen as perverse, weak, or corrupting. So the first step is remind ourselves that we need each other. Liberals need conservatives, and conservatives need liberals, to make the country work. No bird can fly with only a left wing or only a right wing.

I would say we have a heart problem and also a head problem. The head problem is remembering that we're not enemies,



“ The challenge is to get people to extend the boundaries of the love they feel without giving up pride in who they are. ”

“ Inner work goes hand in hand with outer work to create something powerful that can manifest in the world. ”



*Van Jones is a lawyer, CNN political commentator, and founder of The Dream Corps. His new book is Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart, How We Come Together.*

*Lama Tsomo is an American Buddhist teacher in the Namchak lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. She is the author of Why Is the Dalai Lama Always Smiling?*

even when we disagree. We should disagree—and disagree passionately—but then expect some better answer, some higher synthesis, to emerge from the conflict.

The heart part is all the disciplines and practices that allow us to do that better than we might otherwise. We need to stay centered, grounded, open—able to resist when we need to, but also bend when we need to. That’s hard. These spiritual practices help us execute what both our minds and our hearts know is right—to stand for what we believe in—in a way that allows something beautiful to emerge from the conflict.

**Lama Tsomo:** That’s why all spiritual traditions exercise both the head muscle and the heart muscle. Inner work goes hand-in-hand with outer work to create something powerful that can manifest in the world. An obvious example is the Dalai Lama. He has accomplished extraordinary things by exercising both his head and his heart in incredibly trying circumstances.

#### What is his secret?

**Lama Tsomo:** I’m going to mention the four immeasurables: loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, compassion, and equanimity. When you practice the four immeasurables, as the Dalai Lama does, then love for yourself, your favorite people, and your tribe moves out in ever-greater concentric circles until it’s love, compassion, and sympathetic joy for everyone. If you do the inner work of that practice in the privacy of your home, then your outer work has a lot more power because you have exercised your love muscle.

Neem Karoli Baba said, “Never throw anyone out of your heart.” As soon as I eliminate one person from my heart I make my own heart smaller, and I don’t want that. That elimination of people can extend to whole groups. We think that if they weren’t there, it would be much easier to solve all our problems. So we eliminate them from our heart.

But our heart doesn't want to have a boundary around it. We don't want to eliminate anyone from our love. When we think of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Dalai Lama, and other revered and respected figures, we see that this is the secret of their power to help the world.

**Van Jones:** In terms of specific practices we can do, there are all kinds of things conspiring now to make fear and division greater.

Social media is one of them. Algorithm-enhanced tribalism is very, very dangerous, because when you don't understand where the other person is coming from, you just see these nasty, snarky, one-sided tweets. So your view of them becomes more exaggeratedly negative, and you're more scared and stupid with every click and swipe.

I decided I didn't want to be victimized by that. So as a practice, I went and searched for every right wing, conservative, white nationalist I could find and followed them all. Now my Instagram feed doesn't make me feel warm and fuzzy, but maybe you just have to get your warm and fuzzies someplace else. I have a better understanding of where my opponents are coming from, and that informs my approach.

I just think there's a kind of practical fight here. It really is the case that Donald Trump wants to deport millions of people, that Muslims and Jewish people are being harassed in almost unheard of numbers. At the same time, if you are a white, Christian male in the red states millions of liberals need to hear nothing more to not like you. There are real threats out here. That's the reason we need these great practices. They give us a North Star to get through these periods better, not bitter.

**A lot of people these days are debating the usefulness of anger. It can fuel protest and resistance to injustice, but it can also cause more division and hate. Is anger useful now or not?**

**Lama Tsomo:** There's a principle in Tibetan Buddhism I've found really helpful—the difference between anger and wrath. Anger is somebody saying something insulting and you wanting to punch them. Wrath is something quite different.

In the New Testament there's the story about Jesus driving the merchants from the temple. His actions were fierce and appeared angry, but they were actually coming from love and compassion. In Tibetan Buddhism, we contemplate some ferocious archetypal figures that are realized beings. You wouldn't want to meet any of them in a dark alley. We contemplate them so that we can feel compassion in a ferocious form.

**Power without love is destructive. Love without power is, well, powerless. What is the right relationship between love and power?**

**Lama Tsomo:** Human beings are brilliant animals, and we can find all kinds of creative ways to manifest either wonderful or

terrible things. Love combined with insightful wisdom is very powerful, but just having intelligence without the motivation of love and compassion creates things like the atom bomb.

As Starhawk pointed out, there is power over, power with, and power within. If we cultivate all three of these types of power with love and compassion, then something positive that affects the whole society gets to happen.

On the inner level, this can happen because, as many great religious figures and scientists say, we're all absolutely connected. The late physicist David Bohm said that at the quantum physics level, there's no difference between inside and outside your skin. That begins to blow apart our sense of boundaries. It shows us that the true nature of things is that we're all connected.

Bohm was saying that if we act according to how things really are, it's probably going to go better. We're going to be happier and we're going to produce happiness around us. Anytime you're off in your understanding of how things are, you're going to cause suffering for yourself and for others. That ripples out into society in all kinds of ways.

**Van Jones:** One of the great powers that Nelson Mandela had over his enemies was that he actually had a vision of South Africa in which the Xhosa, the Zulu, the Afrikaners, and others all had a place of honour, dignity, and respect.

If I have any quarrel with the present progressive movement it is that there sometimes seems to be too little space for our opposite numbers to be free too, and for them to feel dignity and respect. Speaking to a woman, a person of color, LGBT—or speaking to an immigrant or a Muslim—it seems unfair to say to them, “You have to get free, and you also have to free the people who are holding you down.” It is unfair, and it is unjust. But it is absolutely necessary.

If we don't, from the start, make it clear that our intention is for everyone to be free, then we just get on a seesaw. We're up for a while, and then we're down for a while. We just saw that from Obama to Trump. What has yet to be rediscovered, in the U.S. context, is a third way out—one that allows your love for your own group to be so profound that it requires you to find a way to feel and demonstrate love for your so-called opponent.

**What is the role of spirituality in political life. Can there be deep change, the kind the world needs, without spiritual practice at the root of it?**

**Lama Tsomo:** We humans are herd animals. It seems that every great religion has figured that out. There are churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues, and in Buddhism there is sangha. Anytime we want to change our habits, we've had far better success doing it in groups than all alone. So there's something to be said for that.

➤ page 80





## Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Flaw What is the American project?

**VAN JONES** says it's the ongoing struggle to close the gap between beautiful ideals and ugly realities.

**F**ROM THE VERY BEGINNING of this country, America has been two things, not one. We have our founding reality and our founding dream. And the two are not the same.

Our founding reality was ugly and unequal. Nobody can deny that. Take it from Thomas Jefferson himself. If you go to Washington, D.C., you can visit the great Jefferson Memorial. It's this beautiful place, this amazing place. You can climb those grand steps and see for yourself these words from Jefferson, a slave owner, written in marble and stone: "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

You might be thinking, "This doesn't sound like proud triumphalism from the founders." Well, you're right. It doesn't sound like somebody who thinks he's solved all the problems of the world. It sounds like something is off. Jefferson's words reflect a concern that something profound is wrong with the republic, at the very point of its founding.

He's talking about slavery. The violent enslavement and subjugation of hundreds of thousands of human beings of African descent. And he is worried because the founders failed to abolish that monstrous institution; he himself was guilty of the same personally.

There were many more flaws in this country that should have left the founders trembling. At that time a woman could not vote in America. Native American land and lives were being stolen at mind-boggling rates. LGBTQ folks didn't even have a name. Unless you were a straight, white, wealthy landowner, you essentially had no citizenship rights. That was the founding reality: ugly and unequal.

Now, if that's all America ever was, it would command zero allegiance from anyone. It would be impossible for a decent human being to be a patriot. If America were only about keeping that same small circle on top, it would never have stirred the imagination of billions of people over the centuries. In fact, it would never have survived.

But that's not all America was, even at the start. And that's not all we are now. While you're standing in that same Jefferson Memorial, if you turn your head just a few degrees, you'll see something else. Something astonishing in its beauty. You'll see that the same slaveholding Thomas Jefferson also made this statement: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all... are created equal."

And there you have our most powerful articulation of the founding dream, which is a beautiful vision about equality.

What is the American project? What are we about? Who the heck are we, anyway? The answer to that question is one that has inspired the world. We are that rainbow-hued people, unique on this earth, who contain in our multitudes every color, every faith, every gender expression and sexuality—every kind of human ever born. And we are living together, in one house, under one law. And we mostly get along. Just a few decades ago, what we do every single day was considered impossible. But here we are—a miracle in human history.

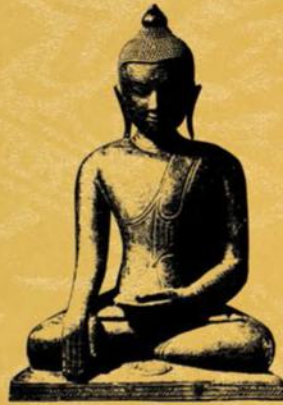
At our best, our mission is simple. For more than two centuries, we have been working to close the gap between the ugliness of our founding reality and the beauty of our founding dream. Each generation tries to narrow that gap a little bit more than the last one did.

No, we will never have a perfect union. But we can always have a more perfect union, decade after decade, generation after generation, century after century.

That's who we are. That's what we do. That's what makes us Americans. ♦

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# Seeing Beyond the Screen

Yael Shy invites *twenty-somethings* to bring some mindfulness into their digital lives.

IF YOU ARE A MILLENNIAL between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six, you probably spend an average of eighteen hours a day consuming media, with approximately five hours of that time engaged in social media and peer-created content. Those hours are consumed across a variety of platforms and may include simultaneous consumption of media. For example, if you spend two hours per day on Facebook, three hours texting, and an hour watching television, that adds up to six total hours, even though it may only translate to three or four “real” hours in your day, if you are doing some of those things at the same time. Media consumption includes texts, surfing the internet, binge-watching Netflix, and playing games on your phone. I reach for my phone at nearly every pause in my day, from the moment I wake up to the moment I fall asleep. Our phones are extensions of ourselves, connectors to others, portals to the world, and addictive tools. If we are going to take our goal of living a mindful life seriously, we have to consider our very intimate, ubiquitous relationship with our devices.

The key to mindful living “off the cushion” is building in a pause to check in with our intention, our body, and our heart before we reach for our favorite distractions. Nowhere is this more palpable and powerful than in our relationships to our devices. When do you reach for your phone? When do you click on social media sites? How do you feel right before heading

to your page on the site? What happens in your mind while scrolling or posting? How do you feel afterward?

For me, that initial reach toward my phone usually comes when there is any type of pause in the action. Aside from just being addicted to stimulation, some part of me suspects there might be loneliness, disconnection, and sadness waiting for me in the silence of phonelessness, and I am scared to face it.

Once I open my time-wasting app of choice—perhaps with some mindfulness, perhaps on autopilot—I immediately begin to tumble down the rabbit hole of posts, tweets, photos, videos, and memes. After twenty minutes (or more) of scrolling along, I begin to realize that I am lost in a scroll-and-click universe where I have the capacity to ingest endless thoughts, photos, and virtual lives of friends and acquaintances, post my own,







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and wait for the “likes” to roll in.

I deeply understand the pull of social media. I find pleasure reading about the goings-on of friends and family who live far away, appreciate the notifications about events and interesting articles, and I like getting affirmation for my posts and photos. I am pretty certain, however, that I could obtain all of those pleasures in about one hour on the site per day, or less. What I do instead is spend hours of my life

scrolling, getting lost in articles, comment conversations, and other people’s photo albums. Like staring blankly at a television screen, the endless scroll allows my brain to zone out from my life and float away.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this zone out, but after a certain period of time, I notice that—like a junk food binge—I feel pretty sick. I feel alienated and lonely, exactly the opposite of the reason I signed on in the first place.

There is a Zen chant that includes the words:

“Life and death are of supreme importance.

Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost...

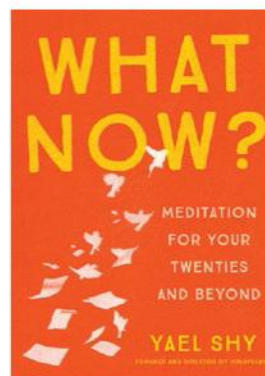
Wake up! Wake up!

This night your days are diminished by one.

Do not squander your life.”

Every time I chant this, I think of the hours and days I have spent on social media. I think of the precious time I have squandered after I have checked in on my friends and loved ones, after I have checked my messages and invites, and after reading any interesting articles. The time spent endlessly scrolling. It makes me sad. It makes me want to be more aware, and to wake up from the social media trance and interact in real time again.

One of the other dangers of too much



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Yael Shy  
Parallax Press; 224 pp.;  
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social media is engaging in what Buddhists call “comparing mind.” This is exactly what it sounds like—comparing our lives, our looks, our achievements, and even our meditation abilities to others to see how we stack up. Everyone engages in comparing mind sometimes, but in the world of social media, where people only publicize the rosy moments, the filtered photos, and the happy news, it is particularly easy to think

we are the only ones having a hard time.

I remember one particular day of college when I made the mistake of Googling a young woman with whom I was planning a conference. Even though this woman was only a few years older than me, I found hundreds of articles she had written, awards she had won, and other accomplishments staring back at me on the screen. Tears streamed down my face as I compared it to what happened when I typed in my own name: Nothing. Nada. No results whatsoever. I am a nobody, I remember thinking, my comparing mind in full force. I will never be as accomplished as this woman. I will never amount to anything. I carried around this dreary view of my own worth all day, long after I had shut down the computer.

Comparing mind starts from a place of insecurity. It rests on an assumption of deficit or lack (I’m not lovable, I’m not worthy) that then looks to the outside world to prove or disprove that flawed assumption. “If I am better looking than Lilly, I am good looking,” the logic goes. “If I have achieved more than Jim, I am successful.” The trouble with comparing mind is that, resting on that shaky foundation of insecurity, it is never satisfied. It never successfully answers the question of whether we are lovable or successful. Even if we come out “on top” in one particular comparison, there is always someone who



seems to have more or be more than us.

Additionally, even if we were to be deemed the best looking, the most lovable, the most successful by others, when the affirmation comes exclusively from the outside world and is tied to our sense of self, we will suffer.

The “self” is always changing, and is completely interpenetrated with everything else in the universe. Its very nature is instability. When I recognize this, how can I take credit for the good things “I” do, since “I” am constantly being influenced by the people and landscapes around me? How can I compare myself to anyone else in the world when every force in their universe and every force in my universe came together in very different, yet interpenetrating ways?

“Self-ing,” the project of continuing to try and reify a separate, permanent, unchanging self, is a delusional project that I find myself trapped in over and over again, and it is what lies at the heart of comparing mind. In many ways, it also lies at the heart of social media, where we are all continually branding ourselves, polishing our images, curating our lives, and then comparing ourselves to the “brands” of others.

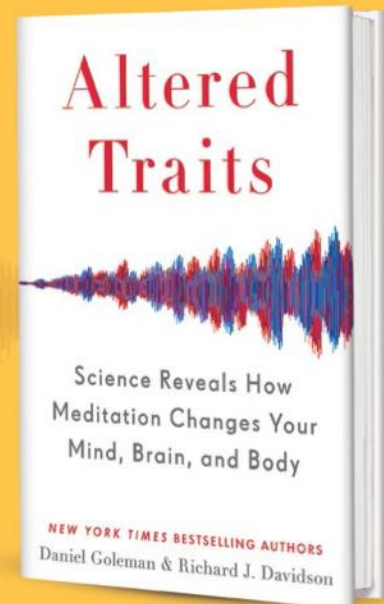
Sometimes, to break out of comparing mind while scrolling through social media, or just looking around the room at a party, I ask myself, “What if I am okay and enough right now? What if the only standard I have to live up to is my deepest, most authentic self?”

The first step in mindful technology consumption is to pause and recognize the power these devices have over us, to check in with ourselves before we reach for them, and to build in pauses, breaks, and (emotional) rehab when it all becomes too automatic, too addictive, and too much. The magic of mindfulness in the “in-between” moments of our life is that we don’t need any special gear, quiet space, or complex instructions to practice it. We can bring meditation to meet us wherever we are, whatever we are doing, right in the middle of our crazy lives. ♦

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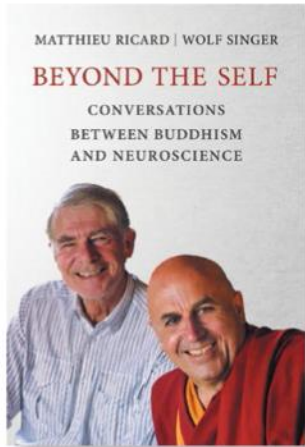
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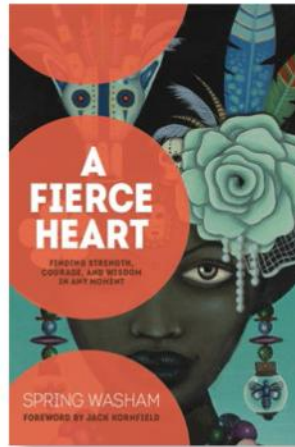
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**BEYOND THE SELF**  
 Conversations Between Buddhism  
 and Neuroscience  
 By Matthieu Ricard and Wolf Singer  
 The MIT Press 2017, 296 pp.,  
 \$29.95 (cloth)

Matthieu Ricard has a doctorate in molecular biology. He’s also a Buddhist monk, photographer, and bestselling author whose books include *The Monk and the Philosopher*, which he co-wrote with his father, the renowned philosopher Jean-François Revel. In *Beyond the Self*, Ricard joins forces with neuroscientist Wolf Singer in order to understand if and how the states of consciousness that are achieved through meditation and mind training are linked to neuronal processes. *What is the unconscious? Is love the highest emotion? What should we make of parapsychological phenomena?* These are some of the many questions the two examine in this conversation that looks at the mind and brain through many lenses.



**A FIERCE HEART**  
 Finding Strength, Courage, and  
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 By Spring Washam  
 Parallax Press 2017, 208 pp., \$16.95 (paper)

In *A Fierce Heart*, dharma teacher Spring Washam offers teachings and stories in order to awaken us to the calling of our own hearts and to empower us to live fully and freely. Washam, a core teacher at East Bay Meditation Center in Oakland, has been nourished by a wide range of spiritual traditions, and this is made clear in the anecdotes that she tells about her own spiritual journey. At one point in her life, for instance, she spent a year studying the shamanic tradition in Peru, where she climbed a mountain with a pair of young shamans and learned her own strength. At another time, she went on a pilgrimage to India and sweated through 1,008 prostrations under the Bodhi tree until she deeply understood that she was bowing to something that could never be destroyed—the innate goodness that she and all of us possess. The foreword of *A Fierce Heart* is by Washam’s teacher, Jack Kornfield.

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*“Never having so many challenges to tackle in my life, I have also never felt so quickly reconnected to Source and a sense of peace.”*

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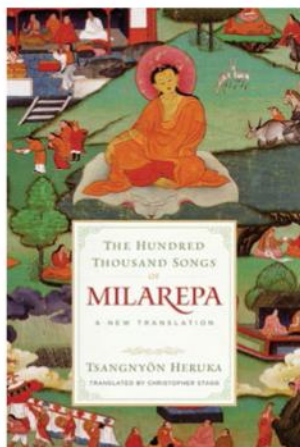
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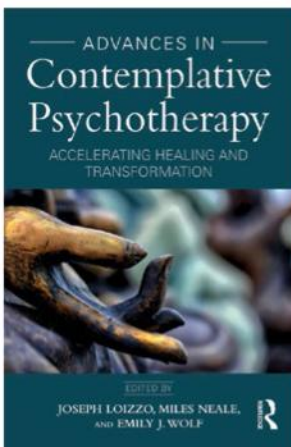


**THE HUNDRED THOUSAND SONGS OF MILAREPA**  
A New Translation

By Tsangnyön Heruka,  
translated by Christopher Stagg  
Shambhala Publications 2017, 840 pp.  
\$39.95 (paper)

Milarepa (1051–1135) is one of the most celebrated figures in Tibetan culture. A perpetrator of crimes and black magic, he turned to the dharma and, through unwavering devotion to his guru and practice, man-

aged to achieve enlightenment in a single lifetime. After his awakening, Milarepa taught the dharma through spontaneously composed songs, which were collected by his students as he neared death. About 350 years later, a wandering Tibetan yogi, Tsangnyön Heruka, penned *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*. This text, which integrates Milarepa’s songs with his biography, became both a literary and spiritual classic. Christopher Stagg’s new translation reflects the liveliness of the original Tibetan.



**ADVANCES IN CONTEMPLATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY**  
Accelerating Healing and Transformation

Edited by Joseph Loizzo,  
Miles Neale, and Emily J. Wolf  
Routledge 2017, 256 pp., \$49.95 (paper)

*Advances in Contemplative Psychotherapy* gives mental health professionals a comprehensive introduction to utilizing mindfulness, compassion, and embodiment techniques in their work. Part one, “Mindful-

ness and Personal Healing,” includes an essay by integrative neuropsychologist Rick Hansen on neural plasticity. Part two, “Compassion and Social Healing,” includes an essay by neuropsychiatrist Daniel Siegel on the interpersonal neurobiology of empathic attunement and social mind-brain development. And finally, part three, “Embodiment and Natural Healing,” includes an essay by clinicians Diana Fosha and Mariana Caplan on using yogic breath and movement to heal trauma. Other contributors to this anthology include Tara Brach, Robert Thurman, and Sharon Salzberg.



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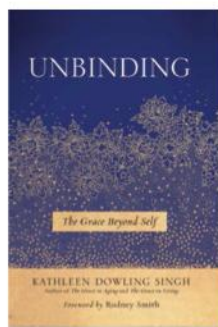
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**UNBINDING**  
**The Grace Beyond Self**  
By Kathleen Dowling Singh  
Wisdom Publications 2017, 288 pp. \$24.95 (cloth)

Dependent origination, also known as dependent arising, means that all things appear in dependence upon other things. *Unbinding* is a rich exploration of this subtle foundational Buddhist teaching, and yet it is not just for Buddhists. Kathleen Dowling Singh wrote it for people of all wisdom traditions—for anyone and everyone who seeks to obtain unity with the absolute through contemplation and self-surrender. *How do our illusions of ego veil our true nature and trap us in suffering, and how can we discover more gratitude, love, and wisdom?* Kathleen Dowling Singh died peacefully two days before the release of this book.

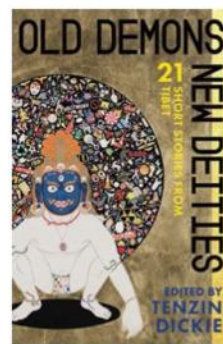


**THE DEPARTURE**  
Documentary film  
Directed and produced by Lana Wilson  
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*What are the three items that are dearest to you in the world? Who are the three people that mean the most to you? What are three things that you would most like to try? Write your answers to these questions*

on nine separate strips of paper. Then choose the three that you'd be most willing to live without. Crumple them up and throw them away. Now choose three more to discard. Now two more. Finally, throw away the only one that you have left.

That, says Zen priest Ittetsu Nemoto, is what death is. Death is losing everything. *The Departure* is a moving documentary about Nemoto's life and work. At a young age, he lost an uncle and two friends to suicide and his grief eventually led him to dedicate himself to helping suicidal people find a reason to live. Today he counsels individuals and conducts unusual but effective death workshops at his temple.



**OLD DEMONS, NEW DEITIES**  
**Twenty-One Short Stories from Tibet**  
Edited by Tenzin Dickie  
OR Books 2017, 304 pp. \$20 (paper)

*Old Demons, New Deities* is the first English language collection of contemporary Tibetan fiction. As Tenzin Dickie states in the introduction, the contributing authors offer Western readers an authentic look at the lives of Tibetans navigating occupation and exile, but they offer their fellow Tibetans a great deal more. The authors, she says, “examine and explain our heartbreak—the heartbreak of our occupation, our exile, our diaspora—and in doing so, they give us comfort, clarity, and a measure of belonging.” There are many bright lights in *Old Demons, New Deities*, including Pema Bhum's “Wink,” which sheds light on the insanity of Mao Tse-tung's regime by giving us a glimpse into the dizzyingly changing fortunes of one family. ♦



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## Why America Needs Love *continued from page 70*

I would like to make a distinction between spirituality and religion, because they aren't quite the same thing. Spirituality can be a very personal experience, while religion provides support from other people who are trying to move in the same direction. But sometimes religion gets tribal, and then it becomes "us" against "them."

When the Israelites were freed from Egypt, God parted the seas, which then crashed in on the Egyptian army. When the Jews rejoiced, God said, "Why are you rejoicing? They're my children too." With our herd instinct tendencies, we sometimes forget that.

There are religious people who are falling into us vs. them, while other churches, synagogues, mosques, and so on are reaching beyond that. I think it's quite possible to do both: to have your intimate spiritual community, your sangha, your congregation, as well as reaching out to people in other congregations. When we do reach out in a respectful way to somebody across the divide, that can allow the kind of change we need right now.

**Van Jones:** Well, all human institutions are shot through with all kinds of foibles and problems. Also, all human institutions tend to assume aspects of the society in which they exist. I think it's a mistake to get madder at religion and religious folks than we get mad at anybody else. People who run corporations, who run sports teams, who create television programs, are also infected by human foibles and societal biases. I think we

do ourselves a disservice when we make totalizing statements about religion, because it tends to bypass a deeper truth.

**Is some form of spiritual practice or understanding necessary for us, as a society, to really change how we relate to each other?**

**Van Jones:** What I would say is that I can't do the work that I've chosen without a spiritual grounding. I am blessed to get to talk to some of the poorest people in the country and some of the richest people in the country, often in the same day. Because I've been exposed to different ways of thinking and being, I have a better chance to actually learn something and be a contributor than I would otherwise.

**Lama Tsomo:** I really had to sit with myself. I tried freestyle meditation, but that was not very successful. So I decided to pick a time-honored method that has been refined over a very long time. Luckily, the world is full of lots of lineages that are replete with wonderful tools that I would never have thought of myself.

I really appreciate the methods I've learned. I found a master who is very accomplished in them. Personally, I have found it really helpful to pick tried-and-true methods. I've also found it helpful to be with other people who have a similar goal.

For that reason, I picked an established religion, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel for myself. But I think if people just sit quietly for a few minutes a day, not having to respond to things on the outside, that's a great place to start. ♦



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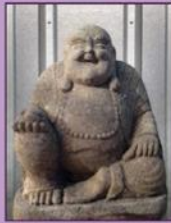
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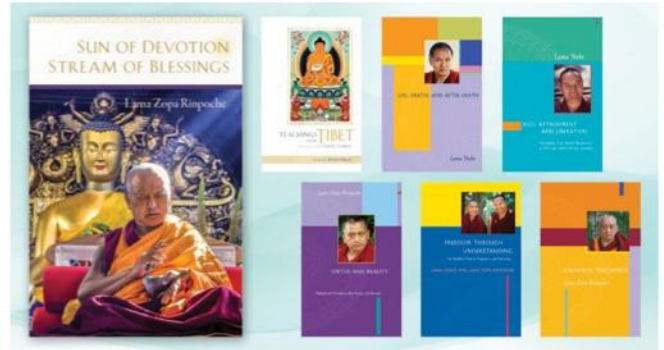
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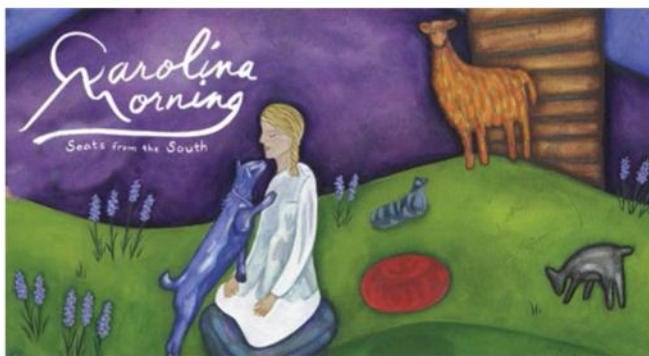
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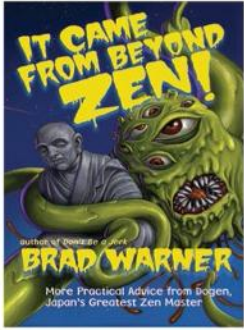
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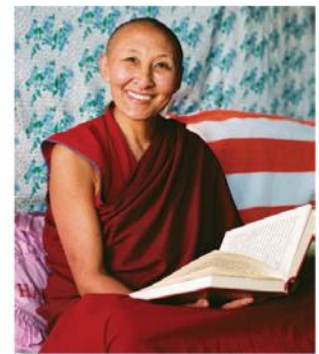
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1715 Hill St., Room 170, Madison, WI 53705. (608) 221-3379, info@isthmuszencommunity.org, isthmuszencommunity.org • Offering evening Zen practice and instruction and regularly scheduled retreats in a warm, welcoming, and compassionate community. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### KANSAS ZEN CENTER

1423 New York St, Lawrence, KS 66044. kansaszencenter@gmail.com, www.kansaszencenter.org • Zen Master Bon Hae (Judy Roitman), Zen Master Hae Kwang (Stan Lombardo). Regularly scheduled practice, retreats, and classes in Lawrence. Affiliated group meets Tuesday evenings in Kansas City. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### MILWAUKEE SHAMBHALA MEDITATION CENTER

2344 N Oakland Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53211-4322. (414) 277-8020, shambhalamke@gmail.com, www.milwaukee.shambhala.org • Explore our diverse programs designed to help people of all traditions discover their inherent goodness, gentleness and humor.

#### PRAIRYERTH ZEN CENTER

www.prairyerthzen.org • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. Visit our website for a schedule. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### RIME BUDDHIST CENTER

700 West Pennway, Kansas City, MO 64108. (816) 471-7073, info@rimecenter.org, www.rimecenter.org • Executive Director Gabriele Otto, Spiritual Director Lama Matthew Rice. Meets: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday class/meditation, 7pm., Sundays, service/practice, 10:30 am.

#### TALLGRASS ZEN CENTER

PO Box 304, Alma, KS 66401. tallgrasszen@yahoo.com, www.tallgrasszen.blogspot.com • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### TEN DIRECTIONS ZEN COMMUNITY

c/o director@tendirectionszen.org, www.tendirectionszen.org • Meditation practice Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm at the Theosophical Society building, 1926 North Main Street Wheaton, IL 60187

#### TERGAR INTERNATIONAL

706 N 1st St, Ste 112, Minneapolis, MN 55401. (612) 460-8837, minneapolis@tergar.org, www.tergar.org • Tuesday meditation 7 pm; check website for other centers and program dates. Summer retreats in NE, NW and MN.

#### UDUMBARA ZEN CENTER—EVANSTON

1330 Ridge Ave, Evanston IL 60201, (847)475-3264, udumbara@udumbarazen.org, www.udumbarazen.org • Regular zazen practice and study schedule; Bodhisattva, chaplaincy, priest training/ordination; Head Teacher Sensei Tricia Teater.

#### ZEN LIFE & MEDITATION CENTER, CHICAGO

38 Lake St, Oak Park, IL 60302. (708) 689-1220, www.ZLMC.org • Offering a comprehensive core curriculum for living a Zen-inspired life of openness, empathy and clarity. Teachers: Roshi Robert Joshin Althouse, Sensei June Ryushin Tanoue.

## SOUTH

#### CHAPEL HILL ZEN CENTER

PO Box 16302, Chapel Hill, NC 27516. (919) 967-0861, info@chzc.org, www.chzc.org • A Soto Zen temple with daily meditation in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. Teacher: Josho Pat Phelan.

#### CYPRESS TREE ZEN CENTER

647 McDonnell Dr, Tallahassee, FL 32310. ctzg@webdharma.com, www.webdharma.com/ctzg • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### DAWN MOUNTAIN CENTER

#### FOR TIBETAN BUDDHISM

2010 Naom St Ste. A, Houston, TX 77054. (713) 630-0354, info@dawnmountain.org, dawnmountain.org • Free Sunday morning meditations, Tuesday night teachings, family programs, retreats. Basic Tibetan Buddhism through Longchen Nyinthig, live or online.

#### ECUMENICAL BUDDHIST SOCIETY OF LITTLE ROCK

1516 W. 3rd St, Little Rock, AR 72201, PO Box 561, Little Rock, AR 72203. (501) 376-7056 (VM) www.ebslr.org; ebs@aristotle.net. • Welcome. Your seat awaits. Weekly Vipassana, Zen and Vajrayana practices. Daily silent sittings. Classes, retreats, events. Full information at ebslr.org

#### GATELESS GATE ZEN CENTER

PO Box 12114, Gainesville, FL 32604. gateless.gate.zen.center@gmail.com, gatelessgate.org • Sitting every Monday 6:30-8pm (instruction at 6) at Gainesville Retreat Center, 1551 SE 51 St. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### HOUSTON ZEN CENTER

1605 Heights Blvd, Houston, TX 77008. (713) 869-1952, www.houstonzen.org • Zen meditation—daily zazen, weekly classes and lectures, sesshin and retreats. Soto Zen. Abbot Gaelyn Godwin and assistant teachers.

#### KARMA THEGSUM CHOLING DALLAS

1000 Armeda Avenue, Irving, TX 75061. director@ktcdallas.org, www.ktcdallas.org • An affiliate study center of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra in New York. Resident teacher, Lama Dudjom Dorjee Rinpoche. Weekly dharma teaching on Sundays, periodic Vajrayana retreats, meditation instruction offered. Schedule and information on web site.

#### LIGMINCHA INTERNATIONAL & SERENITY RIDGE RETREAT CENTER

554 Drumheller Ln, Shipman, VA 22971. (434) 263-6304, sr.operations@ligmincha.org, www.ligmincha.org, www.serenityridge.ligmincha.org, www.ligminchastore.org. • Teachings from the Bön Buddhist tradition of Tibet, Geshe Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche, Spiritual Director: retreats, meditation and practices including dzogchen, Tibetan yoga, dream yoga, and more.

#### LITTLE ROCK ZEN CENTER

1516 W 3rd St, Little Rock, AR 72201. (501) 661-1669, lusauer@aristotle.net, www.ebslr.org/kwan-um-zen • Meditation practice every Tuesday nights from 6:00-7:00 in the large meditation room at EBS - Please join us! A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### MORNING STAR ZEN CENTER

1599 Halsell Rd, Fayetteville, AR 72701-3902. (479) 530-1098, btaylor@uark.edu, www.morningstarzencenter.org • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### ORLANDO ZEN CENTER

c/o Claudia Schippert, 515 S Crystal Lake Dr, Orlando, FL 32803. (407) 897-3685, orlandozencenter@gmail.com, www.orlandozen.com • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### SOUTH FLORIDA ZEN CENTER

7110 SW 182nd Way, Southwest Ranches, FL 33331. (954) 263-4653, southfloridazengroup@gmail.com, www.southfloridazen.org • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

#### SOUTHERN DHARMA RETREAT CENTER

1661 West Rd, Hot Springs, NC 28743. (828) 622-7112, southerndharma@earthlink.net, www.shouthernharma.org • Affordable, teacher-led, silent retreats for all levels of experience in various Buddhist traditions. Spectacular Blue Ridge Mountain setting. Schedule and registration online.

## NORTHEAST

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203 Chestnut Hil Ave, Brighton, MA 02135. (617) 787-1506, Fax: (617) 787-2708, info@shimgumdo.org, www.shimgumdo.org • Shim Gum Do - Mind Sword Path; Zen meditation and martial art training. Ongoing classes and residential programs available.

#### BARRE CENTER FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES

149 Lockwood Rd, Barre, MA 01005. (978) 355-2347, bcbs@dharma.org, www.bcbsdharma.org • Residential and online courses combining study, discussion, and meditation for strengthening sangha, supporting curiosity, and expanding and deepening personal practice.

#### BLUE MOUNTAIN LOTUS SOCIETY

6496 Jonestown Rd, Harrisburg, PA 17112. (717) 671-5057; houseofmeditation@gmail.com; www.bmls.org • The Blue Mountain Lotus Society is devoted to sharing the universal teachings of the Buddha in the 21st century. Director, Sensei Anthony Stultz.

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College of East Asian Studies, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. amida@bffct.org, www.bffct.org • Founded in 2001; offers Sunday morning practice, retreats, meditation instruction, courses, family program, 12 Step Group & prison ministry.

#### CAMBRIDGE INSIGHT MEDITATION CENTER

331 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139. (617) 441-9038, www.cambridgeinsight.org • Vipassana. Guiding Teachers: Larry Rosenberg and Narayan Liebenson. Urban center dedicated to integrating meditation practice and wisdom into daily life. Workshops, retreats, practice groups. Daily sittings, weekly drop-ins, Dharma talks.

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#### CAPE COD ZEN CENTER

169 N Main St, South Yarmouth, MA 02664. (508) 760-1814, capecodzencenter@yahoo.com, www.capecodzen.com • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

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400 E 14th St, Apt 2E, New York, NY 10009. (212) 353-0461, info@chogyezencenter.org, www.chogyezencenter.org • Daily practice, regularly scheduled retreats, talks, interviews, introduction classes. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

**COPPER BEECH INSTITUTE**

303 Tunxis Rd, West Hartford, CT 06107. (860) 790-9750, info@copperbeechinstitute.org, copperbeechinstitute.org • Connecticut's premier retreat center for mindfulness and contemplative practice offering 40+ retreat programs. Beautiful monastery campus with 48 wooded acres 90 minutes north of NYC. Farm-to-table meals, comfortable accommodations. Day and evening meditation groups. Stone labyrinth open daily. All are welcome.

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**DELAWARE VALLEY ZEN CENTER**

PO Box 240, Newark, DE 19715-0240. (302) 533-8819, dvzinfo@gmail.com, www.dvzc.org • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

**DHARMA DRUM RETREAT CENTER**

184 Quannacut Rd, Pine Bush, NY 12566. (845) 744-8114, Fax (845) 744-8483, ddrcc@dharma drumretreat.org, www.dharma drumretreat.org • A center for Chan Buddhist practice and study in the Lineage of Master Sheng Yen. Meditation retreats & activities suitable for beginners to advanced practitioners. Weekly activities. Volunteer opportunities.

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45 Lawton St, New Rochelle, NY 10801. (914) 636-1450, emptyhandzen@yahoo.com, emptyhandzen.org • Guiding Teacher: Rev Konin Cardenas, in the lineages of Sekkei Harada and Shunryu Suzuki. Soto Zen center offering sitting, dharma talks, classes, retreats, and instruction for beginners. Open to the public six days a week.

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202 Meadow Rd, Topsham, ME 04086. (207) 729-6013, nlzc@gwi.net, nlzc.info • Clear teaching clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

**OPEN-HEARTED AWARENESS INSTITUTE**

41 Union Square West, Suite 835, New York, NY 10003. contact@lochkelly.org, www.effortlessmindfulness.org • Effortless Mindfulness, Direct Inquiry, and Compassion Practices to support awakening. Workshops, retreats, and online courses. Founding Teacher, Loch Kelly.

**OPEN MEADOW ZEN CENTER**

212 Marrett Rd, Lexington, MA 02421. (781) 652-8303, openmeadowzen@yahoo.com, www.openmeadowzen.com • Clear teaching clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

**ORYOKI ZENDO**

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128 N. Warren Street, Syracuse, NY 13202. (315) 682-0702, menla108@yahoo.com, www.thek.us • Non-sectarian, Tibetan Vajrayana and Chinese Mahayana practice. Meditation, chanting, pujas, workshops and retreats. Shakyamuni Buddha relics located on site.

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**THREE TREASURES ZEN CENTER**

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## ALASKA

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## CANADA

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### TRUE NORTH INSIGHT MEDITATION

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## INTERNATIONAL

### BUENOS AIRES KWAN UM GROUP

Av. Caseros 490 4H C115 2AAN Capital Federal, Buenos Aires, Argentina. +54 11 43 07 26 80, www.kwanumzen.org/buenos-aires/, kwanumzenbas@gmail.com • Clear teaching, clear mind. Please join us for regularly scheduled practice and retreats. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

### MEXICO CITY ZEN CENTER

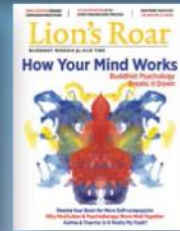
Monte Albán #126, piso 3, Office 403, Col. Narvarte, Mexico D.F. Z.c. 03020 tel. 55193969, kwanumzendf@gmail.com, kwanumzendf.blogspot.mx • Enseñanza clara, mente clara. Por favor únete a nosotros en las prácticas de miércoles a las 19 hrs y domingo a las 10 am. A Kwan Um School Zen Center.

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To be fully alive and  
completely awake is to be  
continually thrown out  
of the nest.

—PEMA CHÖDRÖN







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**Noah Levine**, Founder of Refuge Recovery Centers; Author of *Against the Stream*, *Dharma Punx*, *The Heart of the Revolution* and *Refuge Recovery*.

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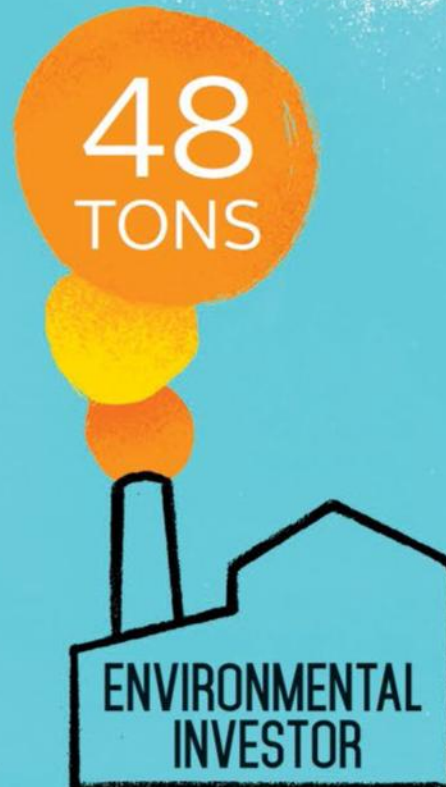


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