

the bell
of
Compassion

Chau Yoder

The Bell of Compassion

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Foreword

For 15 years I have lectured and taught workshops on mindful living to the old and young. This book is my first attempt to capture some of the sharing. I hope you enjoy reading these short excerpts and put them into your daily practice to have a more joyful and less suffering life journey.

May Peace and Joy be with you today, tomorrow and forever.

With Peace Love and Gratitude.

Chau Yoder

Introduction

Try these things, and then make your decision:

Sit quietly and feel your heart beat,
Listen to the sound of the bell of compassion,
Come back to this place.

Focus your thinking on your in breath, from
beginning to end,

Focus your thinking on your out breath, from
beginning to end.

Continue to focus on your breathing;
You begin to notice the loving kindness and
compassion in your heart.

This is your true nature.

Welcome Home

Compassion for Your Mind

Are You Sure?

When things do not go my way and I am upset, if I am mindful, I remember to ask myself the following questions:

- “Are you sure?”
- “Do you have the right perceptions about what has happened?”

My answer is: “probably not.” When I remember to do this, I feel better. I breathe and understand better the other person’s side of the issue.

I have also found that I suffer from my perception that the other persons are stupid, ignorant, careless or disrespectful. The bottom line is that this is from my negative feelings toward others. When I keep focusing on my breathing, I understand where others are coming from, and my judgmental mind and anger go away. I feel better.

Breathe with awareness to stay calm, clear and wise.

Deep Listening

The Heart of Compassionate Action

The Zen Master Nhat Hanh teaches us “Deep Listening.” I have learned that this is the compassionate listening of the Compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokitashvara. When I listen deeply, I practice listening with the “third ear,” listening without judgment, and simply focus on my feelings. As a result I feel less reactive to what others say.

Deep listening is a compassionate action.

Deep listening is listening with understanding and love. To love is to understand. These points are intertwined. If I feel unconditional love in myself then I can listen to others with love and compassion, and without judgment. If I am without unconditional love, I may go to the mode of conflict and then judgment.

Wow, how hard this is! I think, especially with my loved ones. I find that the closer I am to someone, the more I judge and react quickly. I have to remember to remind myself that ‘compassion’ is arising in me to be able to listen without judging. I re-commit regularly to this practice.

In addition to practicing compassionate listening, praying the name of the Compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokitashvara is helpful for me. When I hear something that I feel annoyed or angry about, praying helps me recognize those feelings, begin my breathing, and then silently pray using the Compassionate Bodhisattva’s name until I feel things working out better. When I do that, I detect that I am fuller of love than full of ego.

I find that I let my ego drive my thinking. When something happens and I feel disrespected, my ego's voice says: "Who are you to dare to speak to me that way?" I suffer as a result of this subconscious level of thinking. My ego thinks that I am right and that I know better than others. How can I separate this from my desire to share what I know without judging or doubting others? I feel that this is such a fine line to walk and such a difficult thing. As an exercise, consider something in which you are an expert. If others are not experts, how can you share your knowledge without condescension or excessive pride? This would be egoless.

Egoless behavior is another key to and part of deep listening. I can only listen deeply when I am humble and ego-free.

May the Compassionate Bodhisattva support us on this path of practicing 'Deep Listening.'

Listen With the Third Ear

Many may know of the three ways of listening:

1. Agree
2. Disagree
3. Listen with awareness of our feelings and ask ourselves why we feel that way before we respond.

Recently I was reminded of these three during a class, and specifically that the best way to listen, and listening without judgment is the third way.

The first two ways involve our judgmental mind. I have found that if I am not aware and automatically follow my habit, I listen with an unconscious agreeable or non-agreeable mind. Then I am ready to chime in with my own judgmental ideas. I react fast and my words may offend the speaker.

If I listen the third way, I have noticed that at the beginning my judgmental mind was still working hard but the minute I switch to how I feel about this and why, I found that I can slow down in my response. I understand myself better, such as I am annoyed because my need for respect is not being met or that I feel full of joy to listen to the speakers because I feel the joy from them. With this way of listening, I recognize where I am and why I feel annoyed at certain things, especially in my relationship with my loved ones. Otherwise, I find myself arguing and trying to convince them of my opinions. When I listen with the third way, I can listen without judgment, I am more patient and I don't interrupt as much. Listening the third way definitely helps me achieve my goal of living in harmony with all the people around me.

After all, what we hear is just a bunch of sounds, and should we be upset because some sounds occurred? With this clinical observation about sound in mind, perhaps we can listen more easily without judgment and without reaction. Who is the hearer and who is the speaker?

May you always have a compassionate heart and listen with loving kindness.

Intention Verses Mechanism

How can we go for our dreams? How can we be at peace and still go for our dreams? My heart goes out to those who are going through an effort to decide what they want to do in life, particularly young adults. How can they go for their dreams, still make a living and have the support and approval of their parents?

It is sometimes tough for parents to let their children go for their dreams. Sometimes a student will select a field of study in college, but parents are concerned that there will be no job or ability to support a family in that field in the future. That is parents' fear of safety for their children. They are afraid that their children will not be able to support themselves and not have a good material life. Parents are very aware that even an artist must pay the rent when due.

So how can children go for their dreams and how can parents have peace of mind?

It is tough to do, but maybe wise parents just have to find a way in their heart to let their children be who they are. Children can not live parents' dreams; they need to live their own dreams. Even though we parents may not see how children can make a living from doing what they choose to do, children have to live their own life in their world. Our older world is not the same as their younger world; today the pace of change is increasing rapidly. I know that let the children do what they want is easy to say and hard to do. I also have some personal experience and observations that when parents let children go for their dreams and follow their own path, things will work out as they should. When a child is forced, or even just feel forced, to do what the parents want, the child may have to

revisit their true interests at a later date; this is a waste of effort and time, and in fact we know the child can never be happy until they are able to do what they want. This issue can sometimes become the parents' control of a child instead of only guiding them to independence and adult responsibilities. It is often a fine line to travel, but a very important one.

Finally if the young people keep their intention clear as to what they want to do and be, then the mechanism, the means, will surface. As long as we each focus on making the most out of the present moment, enjoy the process and not worry about the results, yet still write down our goals and make plans in the present moment and mindfully plan for the future, then we can achieve anything. There is a Zen saying: 'There is no way to enlightenment, but enlightenment is the way.' I would say: 'There is no way to success, success is the way' and by extension 'There is no way to happiness, happiness is the way.'

May we be happy and light in our body and spirit.

Living In the Present Moment

How can we treasure the moments that we have with each other? Sometimes we feel busy in all the things we do, and we do not make enough time for each other.

We all know that we will not be with each other forever. We know we need to stop and pay attention to the presence of our loved ones, and to be there for them as often as we can and as often as we like.

Breathe in and out and know the presence of your loved ones. Be in the moment to be there for your loved ones. Be in the moment to be there for you.

Would you like to go and tell your loved ones now how much you appreciate their presence? It may feel hard to do; if you can, you will have a better relationship with your loved ones. They will appreciate you saying loving things. You will feel better yourself for doing that.

Best wishes, With Love, Peace and Gratitude

Pride Covers a Multitude of Sins

I heard this statement in the movie “The Divine Secrets of the Ya-ya Sisterhood”. When the father advised the daughter to heal her relationship with her mother, he said “pride covers a multitude of sins.”

I think a lot of the time I suffer and people around me suffer because we have too much pride in doing or not doing what we should have done. Sometimes we get into a spot that we cannot easily get out of, unless we risk some pride; sometimes we find ourselves digging a hole that just gets deeper and deeper, and we cannot stop digging, unless we risk some pride.

I think it is great to be happy with our “WINS”, but it may become a problem when we feel attached to our pride in what we have accomplished.

Pride creates suffering because it is the opposite of humility. Pride creates separateness. The emphasis is on me-me-me. I am better or we are better than others. I think humility is a noble thing to nurture in our life. A humble person has less ego and less pride. In humility we can get along with people around us better.

Humility helps us remove our separateness from others. Happiness and humbleness still allow each of us to do our best in whatever we do, knowing that the result comes from the efforts of all people around us, including our ancestors, our teachers, our friends, and even our children. It is humbling to contemplate on the hardships and suffering of our family in the endless generations before us, all of which were necessary for us to be here today. Success is more from the collective karma, not just the individual karma.

The key is to do the best we can in all we do, and do things with humility and without pride. Pride will tip us off balance; it will push us to arrogance, and ego-driven behaviors, and eventually we will suffer unnecessarily, when our pride is damaged.

With Peace Love and Gratitude.

Working Mindfully

In this modern world of hard work, and high energy, we do not often have the opportunity to sit and meditate; we may need to renew our practice of meditation. I call this active meditation, and we can use this method to practice mindfulness in whatever we do.

How can we do this? We need to implement sitting meditation twenty to forty minutes daily, and remember to follow our breathing every minute of every day. Aiming to do the best we can and knowing that this is our goal is enough. With that strong foundation of mindful energy, when we are busy in our daily lives, we will be aware of what we do. I have found that with this awareness, I can stop the beginning of suffering by noticing my agitations and worries. Following my breathing while recognizing these feelings helps me remain calm. After a few minutes of breathing, I notice I am calmer and less anxious.

With this breathing technique I can do things in the moment and avoid regretting the past or worrying about the future.

I believe the truth is that the past is gone, the future is not here yet, and the present moment is the most powerful and wonderful moment.

When we live with this statement in mind, we find that we can be in touch with life, with our loved ones and we will enjoy our lives to the fullest.

With Peace, Love and Gratitude.

Mindfulness in Everything We Do, Say and Think

Mindfulness in all the things we do, say and think is living life with awareness and awakening moment by moment. To achieve this state of mind, it requires us to practice awareness of our breathing with great discipline.

Breathing in I know I am breathing in	In
Breathing out I know I am breathing out	Out
Breathing in I know I am here	Here
Breathing out I know now is the moment that I need to focus on	Now

These phrases and breathing with awareness will be the beginning of our practice to stay focus on our mind and our body, and help our mental state stay calm and at ease. With rigorous, regular practice, we will be able to recognize our agitation when it first arises. Once we can recognize that our frustration has surfaced, we continue breathing and “say hello” to this feeling and watch that negative emotion subside.

Best wishes with your practice.

Release of Attachments

Once we have the wisdom that life is impermanent, we learn to live with love and compassion and let go of our attachments; attachments to people, things, ideas and thoughts.

In the movie “Star Wars - Revenge of the Sith”, Anakin transforms himself into Darth Vader as a direct result of his attachment to his wife, Padma. This is the observation of Master Yoda. The irony is that Anakin’s attachment to his love for his wife leads him to attempt to kill her himself.

Love without attachment increases joy and reduces suffering. We may say that it is not natural; however, the truth is when we look at nature we see nothing is there forever. The nature of life is impermanent. We can not expect things or people around us to stay the same or be with us forever. In fact, the only natural thing that we can count on is that everything will change. We change moment by moment including every cell in our body. Without change, a child can not grow into a teenager and then an adult; a fruit tree will not grow tall and bear fruits.

Breathe and enjoy your changes. Live and love without attachments to bring more joy and happiness to yourself and others.

Long life to CHANGE!

Middle Way and Moderation

The Middle Way means to practice with awareness, take time to balance life and not to go to extremes.

To live life in extremes is to be a “hungry ghost” – a person with no satisfactions, constantly running and thinking that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, that something better is always over the hill. A “hungry ghost” loses sight of what is good in front of him, not seeing the “gold” hidden in his own backyard. I believe that if we do too much or too little of anything it is not healthy for our body, mind and spirit.

Breathe and be aware of your actions, thoughts and feelings.

Cause and Effect

Know Your Past and Your Future

When we look deeply at what we are doing in our life now, we will see what we have done in the past and what our future will be.

The Buddha said that by looking at your current life you will know what good deeds you have done in the past, and also what will happen for you in the future. This is termed the Law of Cause and Effect.

The Law of Cause and Effect is absolute and universal. When conditions are right, things and events manifest. If we take care of a fruit tree, and if we have the right weather condition, flowers and fruits will manifest from that tree. If we take care of our body and mind, then we will enjoy a healthy mind, body and spirit.

What kind of seeds do you plant today? What flowers are you growing?

This is the spirit in which we want to plan our future.

Live with Peace, Love, Gratitude and Respect.

Appreciation

Are you appreciative of what is going on in your life right now?

The past is gone;

The future is not here yet;

The most powerful moment is the present moment;

The present moment builds the future.

Make the most out of the present moment. Be appreciative of what you have. Breathe and be aware of what's going on for you in this moment. Do the best in this moment to build the future.

Are you unhappy where you are? If yes, then practice breathing with awareness, find good things in the current situation and appreciate them. This will lift up your spirit and you can perform better where you are to eventually move to where you want to be.

The Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh said we suffer when we do not appreciate enough of what we have. I find this is very true.

The following exercise will assist you in achieving more appreciation of what you have in life: Sit down with a pen and some paper. Breathe with awareness for ten minutes, then let your thoughts flow with a loving heart and begin writing: My happiness is (fill in the blank....) My happiness is (fill in the blank....) Keep writing until you fill three pages with your happiness list. Read them and see how you feel. Whenever you feel unhappy, you may want to repeat this exercise until you feel more joy and appreciate the miracles of life.

A few examples of my happiness list: My happiness is being here and alive. My happiness is to share this exercise with you. My happiness is having a healthy body and mind. My happiness is having a caring husband. My

happiness is having two loving daughters. My happiness is having my 93 years-old father living with us....

Live with Peace, Love, Gratitude and Respect.

Challenges

I have found that when I practice breathing with awareness, it helps me deal with challenges calmly.

Don't ask to have no challenges; ask for how to deal with challenges calmly and wisely.

Live with Peace, Love, Gratitude and Respect.

True Love

True love is the kind of love that is understanding and not dominating. Techniques that help us live in the moment also allow us to be there for our loved ones. We need to hear and understand each other's needs, feelings and wants. These things will help a couple to be more sensitive toward each other. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh also teaches: "There is no pride to true love." If we truly love someone, we should not close our communication link because of our pride. We always need to talk and listen to each other, using loving speech and deep listening.

With Gratitude, Peace, Love and Respect

The Four Aspirations

If we all practice to live life with the four Aspirations: Compassion, Wisdom, Beneficial Actions and Solidity, we will help create a world of “Nirvana”, of “Kingdom of God”. We will help create a society of Love, Joy, Happiness and PEACE.

- **Compassion** --- Derived from Deep Listening. Listening without judgment and reaction.

- **Wisdom** --- Derived from Deep Understanding of the true nature of the universe, such as the Impermanence and Interbeing of life. Living with true understanding of Impermanence and Interbeing, one will feel great liberty and freedom. He will be free from all attachments and have more joy and happiness and no suffering.

- **Beneficial Actions** --- Act with loving kindness and make a difference.

- **Solidity** --- Have the capacity to be present with beings who are suffering. Be like the mother earth which is resilient and non-discriminated. The Earth has the capacity to absorb all negativities and transform them into positivities, like transforming “compost into flowers”.

Live with Peace, Love, Gratitude and Respect.

The Heart with No Limitation

When we live life with the “heart of no limitation”, one that is filled with Joy, Compassion, Happiness and Nondiscrimination, we help create a peaceful world in us and around us.

- **Joy** --- Give yourself and others happiness.
- **Compassion** --- Have a big heart and reduce suffering for self and others
- **Happiness** --- Happiness without discrimination. Be as happy as others when you see others succeed in achieving their goals, just like you achieve your own goals. A heart of no jealousy. There is no separation between others and you.
- **Mind of Nondiscrimination** --- Love without discrimination; love without attachment; love without conditions. Have a free mind to accept, respect and love each other without expecting anything. A kind of unconditional love.

Live with Peace, Love, Gratitude and Respect.

Meditation

Meditation is a way to relax our body and mind. Meditation helps us learn about ourselves. With meditation we can look deeply into ourselves and understand our habits, know more about our feelings and behaviors.

This is the path to end our suffering and assist others.

May our life be filled with love, peace and joy.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a state of wholesomeness, clarity and calm.

We can increase our energy of Mindfulness by being aware of everything around us, and living with compassion in the present moment.

In Chinese characters, Mindfulness is depicted by two characters, NOW and HEART. I love this because I know that when we have our hearts in the now, then we have mindfulness. When we have our loving compassionate heart in the present moment, then we have gained the state, the energy of mindfulness.

To live mindfully, we need to anchor on our breathings; Breathing in, we know we are breathing in, breathing out, we know we are breathing out. Notice the length of your in-breath and out-breath from the beginning to end. If we are able to do this repeatedly, we will find more energy throughout our whole body; we will be more alert and aware in the present moment.

The state of mind, we call mindfulness, is powerful and useful for us to live our daily life with energy, clarity and calm.

We may ask: “When do we need to focus on our breathing?”

The answer is: “Anytime that we remember.” To train ourselves in this habit, we will need to set some periods of time in our daily routine to sit quietly and follow our breathing. This is called sitting meditation. The length of time to build this awareness habit could be 5-15 minutes or 30-60 minutes at a time, depending on how much time we have. If we have only short periods then do it a couple of times a day. The ideal is to have one or two periods of 30-45 minutes daily. Once we are experts at

using the art of mindful living and breathing with awareness in all the things we do, we will be able to remember to follow our breathings while we walk, drive, cook, eat, exercise...

We need to do quiet sitting meditation regularly to gain enough energy of mindfulness. We need to store this energy so when we need to use it we have it. It is similar to saving money in the bank – when we need to spend money, we will have it; or if we want to run a marathon, we will need to train ourselves by running daily to be ready for the marathon.

May we be peaceful, happy and light in our body and spirit.

Sitting Meditation

Sit quietly and follow your breathing. Sit on a chair, or on the grass, or the floor with a little cushion to help support our back. Sit upright as much as possible keeping your spine straight; that is the best way to help the energy flow correctly through your body. Keep your head straight and shoulders relaxed.

There are many ways to do sitting meditation. A few simple steps to help you increasing concentrations and calm your body and mind are:

- Concentrate on listening to the sounds of your breath as you breathe regularly and quietly.
- Breathe regularly and just follow the length of your in-breath and out-breath.
- Count from 1 to 10 with each in-breath and out-breath, then backward from 10 to 1. Whenever you recognize that you lose count, recount from 1 to 10.
- Follow your breathing and **be aware** of different parts of your body, shift your attention step by step from head to toe or from toe to head.
- Follow your breathing and **relax** different parts of your body, shift your attention step by step from head to toe or from toe to head.

During sitting meditation, you may notice that your mind is wandering off; you can just calmly follow one of the above steps to bring you back to the present moment. You can remind yourself to focus on the present moment

by contemplating on the saying: “The past is gone, the future is not here yet, and the most powerful moment is the present moment. Breathe and enjoy this moment.”

At the end of your sitting meditation, take about 3-5 minutes to gently and lovingly massage your body from head to toe or from toe to head.

May we be fresh, solid and free.

Guided Meditation

Guided meditation can be done sitting upright or lying down. You can be guided by a live voice or a recorded voice to focus and relax different parts of your body or to contemplate on various states of your being. There are many varieties of guided meditations. The book “Blooming of the lotus” by Thich Nhat Hanh has many varieties of guided meditation exercises. There are many tapes and CDs of guided meditations and you can create your own.

May we be free from anxiety, fear and worry.

Deep Breathing

During the day, no matter what you are doing; just once in a while follow your breathing. It is useful to take a couple of deep breaths once in a while during the day and at the beginning of a sitting meditation.

Breathe in through your nose and allow your stomach to expand a little, hold it for a second, breathe out through your mouth or nose and let your stomach drop back to the normal state. Or breathe out through your mouth or nose and suck in your stomach and breathe in through your nose and let your stomach expand back to the normal state.

May we know how to nourish the seeds of joy in ourselves.

Mindfulness Benefits

When we live in mindfulness, we are calmer and able to see with a 'third eye' - we have better clarity, see things clearly. We are able to understand nature, people and what's happening around us better, with more compassion and loving kindness. We are able to hear with a 'third ear' - we are able to listen compassionately, with understanding and love. We can hear what people are saying and not saying; in a sense we can read people's moods better and understand their feelings and needs better. This can also apply to ourselves; we will find that we can understand ourselves better. Leaders need to understand themselves to understand others.

With mindfulness we are also a-tune to and understand our body and mind. We will know if our body needs some rest, needs some water, food or whatever. If we are a little bit tired and we take care of ourselves then we will not get exhausted and get sick. If we feel a little sad, and we take a few breaths to take care of our own emotion, then we quiet down so we don't react into something that we may regret. If we are unhappy about something and we don't take care of it, later when someone just touches a little bit on that sore spot, we may react with an intensity that is surprising to others. So breathe and take care of your body and emotions wherever you have an opportunity.

When our body and mind are in the state of mindfulness, we can speak in loving kindness. Our tone of voice will be gentle and easy for others to listen to us. We will be able to digest what others say to us, stop, think, and speak rather than being driven by our own bad habit energy.

When we touch someone with loving kindness, they will have a better chance to touch someone else with loving kindness. We can create a better day for ourselves and people around us. It is touching one person at a time to bring peace to ourselves and to others in the world.

May the energy of mindfulness be with us always.

Compassion for Your Body

Centering With the Shoulder Blade Muscles

It has been a wonderful practice for me to focus on the muscles between my shoulder blades when I sit, drive my car and practice Tai Chi / Chi Gung. I feel so free and relaxed when I do this. In the past, my shoulders had a tendency to stiffen up. A dear friend taught us this Pilates exercise at one Sunday meditation session. Since then I regularly focus on the muscles between my shoulder blades, relax them, and imagine them lengthen down to the ground. I then feel my whole shoulders and back relax all the way to the tailbone and to the feet level.

As a result of this, I've found my Tai Chi / Chi Gung movements much smoother and with more ease.

Driving becomes a joy when I relax my hands on the steering wheel and let the muscles between my shoulder blades drop down to the tail bone. Right now while I am typing on the computer I am doing the same exercise. I am so happy! What a great feeling!

Hallelujah!!! I love this feeling.

Hope this note can inspire you to do this exercise.

May you have peace and joy in your body and spirit.

Chi Gong Health Stick Exercises

Start Position:

Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Feel solidly on the ground.

Breathe nine times while focusing on three energy-areas of your body: Centers of the bottom of your feet, the Dantien point (the point at two inches below your naval and straight down from the Crown of your head), and the Crown of your head.

Focus:

During the exercises below, be aware of the movements with your breathing in and out, and then sink and relax. Do all these movements with great awareness of your body and mind. Most importantly, do these exercises safely, know your body, do not stretch beyond your limit and do not hurt yourself. BE SAFE!

Set 1 – Upper Body:

1. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; arms straight but not stiff; while breathing in, move the stick above your head to the back; while breathing out, move the stick back to the front to the original position. Sink and relax. Repeat this movements 8-10 times.

2. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms up) behind your back, arms straight down; breathing in, stay in this standing position; while breathing out, slowly bend your body forward at the hip level, stop at 90 degree position,

your arms and the stick will be toward the sky, behind your back and above your head; while breathing in, straighten up your body slowly and move the stick back to the original position; breathe out, sink and relax. Repeat this movements 8-10 times.

3. From standing position, rest your stick behind your neck and on your shoulders, with the arms and hands rest on the stick from behind it and palms down on the stick. Rotate your body from left to right and vice versa at the hip level. Breathe in and out with each movement. Repeat this movements 8-10 times.

4. From standing position, rest your stick behind your neck and on your shoulders, with the arms and hands rest on the stick from behind it and palms down on the stick; breathing in stay in this standing position; while breathing out, slowly bend your body forward and touch one end of the stick on your right hand to the left foot; look up at the other end of the stick that is on your left hand and is up toward the sky; while breathing in, straighten up your body slowly and move the stick back to the original position; breathe out, sink and relax. Repeat this movement following the same guideline but go to the opposite side of your body. Keep alternate sides. Do a total of 8-10 times.

Set 2 – Lower Body:

1. Stand with one foot in front of the other. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; while breathing in, move the stick above your head to behind your back, put more weight on your back leg; while breathing out, at the same time, switch your weight to the front leg, move the stick above your head to the front at hip level and kick up the back leg. Repeat this

movement 4-5 times. Switch your legs and repeat the exercise 4-5 times. Sink and relax.

2. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; breathing in and stay in this standing position; while breathing out, move the stick to the left (stick at a vertical position), kick up the left leg to the right side, put the leg back to the standing position and at the same time move the stick back to the front at the original position. (Change side by moving stick to the right, and kick right leg to the left. Keep alternately switching sides for 8-10 times). Sink and relax.

3. Stand with one foot in front of the other. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; while breathing in, move the stick above your head; while breathing out, bend at the hip level toward the front with the front leg bending at 90 degree and the back leg straight but not stiff. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) parallel to the ground in front of you; while breathing in, go back to the standing position and move the stick to above your head. (Keep doing these movements for 4-5 times; switch legs and repeat movements for 4-5 more times.) Sink and relax.

4. Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Breathing in, raise the stick straight up in the air and bring in good air /good energy to your body. Breathing out, bend down at your hip level and lower your back as much as you can and stick parallel to the ground. (Keep doing these movements for 8-10 times.) Sink and relax.

Set 3 – Whole Body

1. Feet are in a parallel position and apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; while breathing in, move the stick to the back with the half moon shape (one hand at the hip level and one at the ear level); while breathing out, move the stick back to the front at the original position, sink and relax. (Alternate side: left then right). Do these movements 8-10 times. Sink and relax.

2. Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Breathing in, raise the stick straight up in the air and bring in good air /good energy to your body. Breathing out, bend down and twist your arms and lower your back until the stick is parallel with the ground (bend down as much as you can). Repeat this movement and rotate your hands in the opposite direction. Do these movements 8-10 times. Sink and relax.

3. Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Breathing in, raise the stick to the right side at a vertical position, at the same time, stand on your toes and look toward the heel of the left foot. (Alternate side: stick to the left, look at the right heel). Do these movements 8-10 times. Sink and relax.

4.a Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Put your left hand on your left hip. Hold your stick vertically on your right hand with thumb down and your right arm straight out horizontally at the shoulder level. Breathe in, bend your back toward the back, at the same time swing the stick in front of you and then above your head toward the back; Breathing out straighten up your

body. Keep swinging the stick with awareness in the circular motion for 4-5 times. Sink and relax.

4.b Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Put your left hand on your left hip. Hold your stick vertically on your right hand with thumb down and right arm at the shoulder level. Move your stick to position it in front of you. Breathe in, look at the tip of the stick (at the long end of the stick below your hand), turn your body toward your back and also swing the stick toward the back, when you can not see the tip of the stick any more then bend your body forward (90 degree), breathing out, bend your arm and let the stick move above your head toward the front. Continue swinging the stick for 4-5 times. Sink and relax.

Change the stick to your left hand and repeat step 4.a and 4.b.

Set 4 – Total Body Energizing

1. Rest your stick behind your neck and on your shoulders, with the arms and hands rest on the stick from behind it and palms down on the stick. Breathing in, bend your body toward your right until the stick is at the vertical position (or close to it) and look up at the tip of the stick that is toward the sky. Breathing out, stand up. Repeat this to the opposite direction (to the left). Keep alternate sides and do this for 8-10 times. Sink and relax.

2. Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; while breathing in, stand on your toes and raise your stick to the air; while breathing

out, squat down to sit on your toes and move your stick to be in front of you; keep your back straight; keep being on your toes and repeat this 8-10 times.

3. Feet are in a parallel position and are apart at the shoulder width; knees bend a little, and tuck in at the hip level. Hold the stick with both hands (Palms down) in front of you at the hip level; while breathing in, move the stick above your head and to the back and bend your back backward as much as you can; keep having your arms straight but not stiff and hold your stick at the same distance; while breathing out, bend your body at the hip level to your right, and keep rotating to your front then left. Keep rotating your body for 4-5 times. (Then reverse the direction and keep rotating for another 4-5 times.) Sink and relax.

4. Stand with one foot in front of the other. Hold the stick at one end and rest the other end on the ground at the side of the front foot. Breathing out, move the stick and your body forward; breathing in, move the stick and your body back; (This movement is like row your boat in place.) Keep doing this for 4-5 times and then change the rotation direction and do the movements for another 4-5 times. Switch legs and move your stick to the opposite direction. Repeat the movements.

Have fun and best wishes!

(These exercises are based on the work of a Vietnamese Chi Gung Master Mai Bac Dau)

Compassionate Stories

My Heart Was Lifted Up

My heart was lifted up by a beautiful encounter with my dad's eye doctor today, January, 11, 2005. I have never met a doctor who was so aware of human feelings. I am so happy. My heart is still opened up with such gentleness and kindness that came from this doctor.

Today I had the good fortune to accompany my dad to see his eye doctor. My dad usually goes by himself, but this day he had a late appointment. I did not want him to drive in the dark, so I asked to take him. While waiting, I saw the doctor several times while he was dealing with different patients; he looked so fresh and relaxed. His face and a small amount of gray hair radiated with tranquility and solidity.

Half an hour later, I talked to a female optometrist who was picking up newspapers laying around the office about their office. She was also very calm and cool. To my surprise shortly after that, the doctor came out and greeted me. He said that it was his privilege to know and serve my father, and that my father is a great man. I thanked him and told him that my dad always told me how kind he is.

After this encounter, I can see why my dad glowed whenever he talked about his eye doctor. He was so happy that he has gone to this doctor for many years; he told me it was 20 years.

I appreciate that this world has a doctor like this doctor. He has such a good nature, when he is walking around he is just happy, he exhibits his friendliness. He came out and took time to talk to me. What a nice gesture!!!

May he be happy, May he be free, May he be joyful, and May he be at peace. These are my prayers for this kind loving doctor. The truth is he is already there.

This is truly a lesson of loving kindness to me. People like my dad's eye doctor give me hope and joy in life. I feel so grateful that my dad chose him to be his doctor, that the Bodhisattva's wisdom guided my dad to this wonderful doctor. It also shows to me that my wonderful father lives his life well, to be able to attract great people into his life, and at the age of 92 years old, he is still clear, alert and healthy.

Today while we waited at the office I also had a nice opportunity to share with my dad what I read in the Fortune magazine on how to stay young, how to train one's physical brain, they called it. I encouraged my dad to start doing his kung fu hand exercises again this week, and that I will come and study with him next week. I am looking forward to helping my father to stay healthy, happy and alert by keeping his spirit high.

May he be happy, may he be free, may he be joyful, and may he be at peace. These are my prayers for my father.

Water Happy Seeds

January 28, 2005

Dear loved ones,

Do I water your happy seeds well enough? Probably not, I need to do this more. Recently I discussed this with my daughter, Ann, and we practiced that together. So sometimes, she would remind me by saying “water good seeds, water good seeds!” She looked so happy. Yes, I need to do more of that. During the last two days, I committed to focus on Loving Speech. I feel better now, and do not feel my old annoyance. “Water good seeds” definitely comes with Loving Speech. So from today on, I will focus on “Water good seeds”.

How do I water good seeds in others? I need to be very generous and content to see the good seeds in others to be able to water them. I also need to have lots of compassion and loving kindness in me to be able to recognize good seeds in others.

From today on, I commit to recognize the good seeds in others and water them well.

Every morning I write on a piece of paper: “I commit to focus on Loving Speech and to water the good seeds in others today, tomorrow and forever.”

May I be joyful, light and happy so I will be able to see the good seeds in myself and others.

Loving Kindness Practice

Jan. 19, 2005

This week I get to focus on loving kindness practice (Bodhichitta). Thay Tu Luc came to join us at our Laboi Day of Mindfulness last Saturday at our house. He talked about the best way to ensure we are on the right path is to practice. We can do this by opening our heart and mind to accept others and care for their suffering.

Thay Nhat Hanh also wrote a wonderful article about the Tsunami disaster related to ‘cultivating loving kindness’. He said we need to consider the loss of the victims as a part of us that were lost. What a ‘grand’ concept. I know I need to work on this more. Most of the time, I know this from the intellectual level, and only once in awhile from the heart level.

Thay Chan Quang in his video titled “Cheerfulness”, suggested that if every night, when we lay in bed just before going to sleep we concentrate our mind to one focal point of building loving kindness in our heart and mind until we fall a sleep. After a couple of years of this practice or sometimes 10 years, for some people, he said. We will see tremendous results in us.

I commit to practice this every night.

May we cultivate our compassionate heart.

May You Have Maximum Peace and Joy in Your Life

Dear friends,

I wish that from this day on you will commit to have maximum peace and joy in your life. Yes, commit to yourself. If you don't take care of yourself, who will? If you don't have what you want to give to others, then how can you give it to others?

I know we all want love and happiness in our lives, so if we don't have love and happiness in ourselves, we can't not give that to others.

I will describe a "Peace-of-mind square" that will help us evaluate four essential aspects of our lives:

1. Physical side: How do you rank yourself on this side of your life? Are you fit? How do you rate from 0 to 10, where ten is the best? Do you want to be healthy and fit? You probably already know that your body and mind are connected together. A healthy body will create a healthy mind and vice versa. I was like a 4 on this.

When I first became aware that I have limitation on my physical side of my square, I made a commitment to go out on a limb to do the best I can to overcome fear of height. I took the challenge to do some ropes course events in a motivational seminar. I knew that it would be good for me. It is a metaphor to help me overcome other fears in my life that prevent me from having a number 10 in whatever I want to do.

After these ropes course events I went on to bungee jumping, tandem sky diving, and hiked the Grand Canyon rim to rim. I still remember how powerful I felt after

doing each of these events. I felt as if I could conquer the whole world. I could do whatever I wanted to do. May I remind you that I used to be so fearful of heights that I cried at the end of climbing up a little hill next to my daughter's elementary school that is only about 50 feet high.

Now I am a Chi Gung teacher and have been taking Tai Chi for over 10 years. I would rate my physical side at 8 or 9 now.

2. **Self expression side** of me was also very small; I would say a 4 scale. I could not express myself in a group of 20 or so without so much fear, I would forget what I wanted to say. Now after about 7 years of practicing and recognizing my negative programs regarding ego, fear of rejection, and fear of success, I rarely worry about what people think of me when I speak. I know I always share from my heart. My little heart has a little more love now, and a little more open-ness and vulnerability. I would rate my Self Expression side a score of 9 now.

3. **Mental / Wealth side.** I was comfortable with this side. I had a great education, great job, and good money. I rated this 5 and now I would say it is an 8. We are fortunate to have good living before and now. However, I feel that we have more liberty now. We have been retired from our first career for about 6 years and now we get to travel, and do spiritual and service work all the time.

4. **Relationship / Spiritual side:** Relationship with others I would say before it was about 5 and now 8; I have more friends now, and the relationships with my husband and my children are much better. My two adult daughters are my friends. Without the mindful living that

I have been practicing, I don't think I would achieve these relationships.

Spiritually I definitely grew from a 4 to a 9 now. I am so lucky to have my work now surrounded by spiritual activities. I publish books, CDs and DVDs on mindfulness teachings by the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. I am a Chi Gung and mindfulness teacher. I also give talks on stress management and mindful leadership.

I recommend that you rate your own Peace of Mind Square and work on enlarging and balancing all four sides.

With best wishes, Love Peace and Gratitude.

My Journey of Transforming Garbage into Flowers

I consider myself very lucky. In 1986, the year I turned 40, I attended a personal growth class that taught me how to connect with people besides my family. This was the first time I came to understand the interconnectedness of mankind.

I was raised in Vietnam during the VN war, and I learn to be scared of strangers; I remembered riding bicycle to school and not daring to look to either side, being afraid of being approached by strangers. My path was straight from home to school without looking around or seeing any body or anything.

The insight of human connectedness has resulted for me many moments of love, joy and freedom.

Another key tool from this class that sticks with me until now is guided meditation. I have used and practiced it almost daily, from 1986 until now, and I expect to continue this practice.

Mindful living was introduced to me by the People Synergistically Involved (PSI) classes. One day later on, we went to Kim Son monastery and happened to notice its bookstore which at that time was just a shack over the beautiful ocean far away across the Santa Cruz Mountain. Two books: “The Miracle of Mindfulness” and “Being Peace”, both by the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, caught my eyes. We bought them and those are the two books that entered me into my spiritual journey. I returned to learning what being a Buddhist is all about.

Studying and practicing Buddhist Psychology and Engaged Buddhism as taught by the Zen Master Thich

Nhat Hanh, gave me more peace and joy and less suffering in my daily life than I had ever known.

I feel so lucky to have encountered the Dharma in this way. What a wonderful teaching!

I used to be fearful of heights, but I made a choice to conquer this fear. Jim and I went to a class in 1987, which includes a ropes course. I learned to breathe and be aware of my fear of heights, then go ahead and do what I need to do. We completed several ropes course events. One required climbing up a 50 foot pole, turning around 180 degrees and jumping off to a trapeze. I remembered how scary that was. I know I was shaking up there, but the trapeze represented my goal, whatever it was at that time I no longer remember. However, I remember that I was determined to go for my goal, and I jumped for the trapeze. I did not make it, and I was disappointed, but with all of the support from the people on my team, I was consoled that at least I went for it. It took courage to climb the swaying, 50 ft high pole, shaking at the knees but still going for it.

The zip line was another scary and thrilling activity. I remember standing on a rock ledge; it was hard to look down to the bottom of the valley from the place where I was standing far above everything. I don't know how high it was, but it was high. I could not see the people who were already assembled down below and waiting for me. They looked small and far away. It was hard for me standing up there, waiting and holding on the trolley and thinking about making a jump off a cliff. I used all the breathing techniques, and I finally took a step into space. I remember the thrilling feeling the minute the ride started. What an exhilarating feeling! It was the best. I felt like I could conquer the world at that moment. I realize after that, that lots of time it is hard to take the first step to do

something because of fear, and once we do it, we have so much fun and freedom we don't exactly know and can't say why we waited to do it.

Over the following years, I kept doing things to enhance my non-fear of heights. In 1989, we went bungee-jumping. One day we watched a show on a local TV featuring Jan Yanahero going bungee-jumping. She is a small oriental lady like me, so I said to Jim that I'd like to do that – She can do it, I can too, was my thinking. Jim coordinated the event and invited some his friends from his office at Bank of America; about 6 of us went. I had fun and high energy preparing and watching people who went in front of me. Suddenly it was my turn. I was surprised that my fear of heights was still strong. When the supporters around me finished counting to three, I was supposed to jump, but I could not. I yelled: “NO, NO, WAIT!” I wanted to take a couple more breaths to be ready for it. After I filled my chest and tummy with more air, I jumped and again had a wonderful eyes-wide-open view of myself go down and down and closer, closer to the river full of rocks and water below me. I remembered that we talked to the designer of this jump. The bridge we used was a 120 ft PG&E bridge in a remote area up north (near Sonora and Angels Camp.) When I got there I found out that it was perhaps illegal in some way. The folks who coordinated it said they will have to pack up and go if a police car arrives. They had one person as a lookout on one of the high rocks along the long entrance road to the bridge, with a radio to communicate with the people on the bridge. I remember telling myself: that I have never done anything illegal, so should I do this now? But I decided that I'll go for it, that we are here already. The desire to conquer my fear overcame the desire to be absolutely 'good.' I also told myself why not to get out of

my little box for once. That was definitely a worthwhile experience. I used to be a very strict follower of rules; even when sometimes the rules are not reasonable. I believe now that rules can be broken, and I follow guidelines with wisdom and care.

My physical side kept expanding with other adventures. We hiked the width of the Grand Canyon from rim to rim in two days. That was a wonderful experience to connect to nature. We learned about the rocks at the lowest part of the Grand canyon that are 3 billions of years old. The Earth is only about 5 billion years. What a feeling of the vastness of nature and of life. I remembered that experience clearly although it was 12 years ago. Jim and Lynn walked in front, Ann and I walked behind them. I had just attended a Thich Nhat Hanh Mindful Living Retreat before this adventure, so I was consciously aware of my steps; I also chanted ‘Nam Mo Bo Tat Quan The Am – Namo Quan Yin.’ At one point, on day two, along the bottom Bright Angel Creek, there was a fallen, big tree right in front of our path. Ann and I stopped and sat on the tree and looked around. We saw behind us, at one edge of this wonderful Grand Canyon, a natural statue with the shape of Quan Yin, as clear as it could be. I felt so thankful that we stopped and turned around to see this wonderful image. I took a picture of this natural image of the Compassionate Bodhisattva Quan Yin.

May the joy and miracle of life be with us all.

Be True to myself

*Accept your great things and strengthen them,
Embrace your weak things and transform them.*

“I love myself and approve of myself” is a sentence that I learned from Louise Hay. It helps me to feel good about myself. Saying this sentence again and again silently has helped me overcome self blaming and guilt.

When I feel down and feel like I am judging myself, if I remember to say this sentence, I have found that after a while I feel better and the heartache kind of feeling goes away.

“Be true to myself”, is to recognize both my strengths and weaknesses and strengthen them and transform them as appropriate. When I don’t know where I am, then I know I am in a dangerous position. If I know where I am at least I have a chance to transform the situation or enjoy its greatness.

Right now, for example, I am focused on writing something everyday for what may become this book. I am trying to be true to myself and trying to recognize and accept my feelings and road blocks. I write things down as I know how, and let it unfold.

“Let things unfold” is another art, and part of “Be true to myself.” I try to let things happen smoothly rather than struggling. I do my best to know my strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes I may think that this is not good enough. When I am about to die, will I sit there and worry about what I have accomplished? I spend each day and each moment well, and do the best I can. If I sit there and worry about what I should or might accomplish rather than just do it, I lose lots of energy to worrying, and have

less energy to devote to the task or adventure in front of me.

If self-discipline is my strength, then I better hold onto it and use it. I think discipline is one of my strengths, and I always stick with the task and, in this case, write everyday for a while and see what I receive at the end.

One of my weaknesses is that I don't think I can write well. I am afraid of the result. I am working to transform this feeling. I will keep writing until I feel good about what I write or when people say to me that I write well. It is a nice feeling to think that in some future day that I will have written a book that people read and value.

I have unique knowledge of a Buddhist life, clear moral insight, and skill at presenting material enthusiastically and clearly, and I have a special multicultural experience; I strongly feel we each have the responsibility to develop and use whatever capacity we have been given. This is our obligation and our joy, to help others be their best.

Stick with this thought. One essential method is first to notice and then to understand the feelings that block us from doing something. To call it by its true nature and reveal it, transform it. See the reality, and then we may transform it as we wish.

May we learn how to nourish the seeds of joy in ourselves.

Be True to myself, part 2

Amazingly when I write to this part I already feel that I can write better than before. I don't know if it is true or not, but at least I feel good about writing and my hands keep typing.

Part of my brain is saying that 'you are babbling', part of it is saying 'that is ok, go for it'. I need to keep listening to the encouraging feelings and keep going. I like this new spell-check feature, too. As I type the computer corrects my obvious spelling errors. Just as if I can recognize my non-wholesome seeds and start changing them as they occur. Neat! I can have fun with this analogy.

I just paused and closed my eyes for a minute, to be more in touch with my heart and feelings and see my dream. My current dream is having a relaxation CD made and a book written. I feel a good and calm picture of these things manifesting. Manifested: the book and CD are both here and they are just waiting for a couple more of conditions to manifest completely. What are the conditions needed to help them manifest? My faith that I can do it is the most important thing. As I write, this becomes clearer to me. My belief that I can do it will motivate me to do so. This is also a key ingredient for going for my dream, and for all dreams. Faith and beliefs are essential ingredients to calm my mind and body; for me to just do and let things unfold. Faith also gives me encouragement, energy, hope and excitement, in a good way to calmly do what I can do. Do the best I can do. This is an exciting and energizing observation.

Be true to yourself by making a list of strengths and weaknesses; see how you can cultivate your strengths and

transform your weaknesses. Start out by recognizing your greatness. Yes, your greatness. What are they for you?

My strengths today are:

- Good heart, working for a better world, compassionate, loving, cheerful, energizing, trustworthy, discipline, calm, gentle, positive, good smile, pretty face, strong, healthy, spiritual, considerate, educated, strong inner strength.

My weaknesses today are:

- Short, grouchy at times, negative thinking, selfish, egoist...

OK, that is it for now, I need to go. I plan to write again tomorrow.

May our compassion grow daily.

Namo Bodhisattva of Great Compassion.

Chau Yoder, born in Hanoi, Vietnam, has a deep aspiration to share methods of mindful living with others. An engineer by profession, she has worked for 25 years as a manager in Information Technology and as an Applied Behavioral Science consultant. Having studied with the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh and Jon Kabat-Zin, Chau has lectured and taught workshops on Mindful Leadership and Mindful ChiGung for many years. In 2002, Chau received the Certificate of Continuation from Odyssey Teams, Inc. on Low Ropes Course events. She currently leads Mindful Tours to Viet Nam, and coordinates La Boi Press, publishing Thich Nhat Hanh's books in Vietnamese language. Chau is a Dharma Teacher, ordained by the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

Chau has been happily married to Jim for 35 years, and has close relationships with their two grown-up daughters (Ann and Lynn.)



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