



Washington  
Mindfulness  
Community

# Sangha Reflections

Spring 2007

Newsletter of the Washington Mindfulness Community

## *Some Thoughts on Building Sangha in the Classroom*

By Joann Malone

A friend once mentioned the idea of building sangha in the classroom as an alternative to not being able to do it very well with fellow faculty members. In some ways, I guess I feel I've been doing that for many years and just have never articulated it very well. It's not the same as a group of people coming together for the purpose of intentionally building a spiritual community. But especially in conflict resolution courses and "Peace Studies," students do choose the class based on some interest in making peace and solving problems. Choice is important. Of course, families can become sanghas and people don't have original choice about being a part of a family, at least the children don't. But it is quite challenging to think of a classroom where students are placed quite randomly with a teacher whose spiritual path includes sangha building as a possible sangha, at least for the teacher. It can become a refuge, a safe place, a support system, a place where young people are able to share in a very personal way with the understanding that their confidentiality will not be violated. This takes leadership and intention on the part of the teacher.

I actually try to create an atmosphere of *respect* in all my classes and have done so even before becoming a practicing Buddhist. If students understand and see the teacher model respect for other students, the atmosphere can grow to a point where occasional thoughtless interruption or rude behavior is frowned on by the whole group. Respect is catching. The teacher must believe deeply in its power to transform a group and be rigorous in practicing respect toward the students in order to make it work in a group. No sarcasm, belittling, making fun of a student as a way

See "In the Classroom," p. 2

## **Mindfulness and Science of the Mind: Effects on Depression**

By James M. Figetakis

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second article in a two-part series stemming from the "Science & Clinical Applications of Meditation" conference held in Washington in the fall of 2005. To read James' first article, please go to [www.mindfulnessdc.org/reports/newsletters/pastnewsletters](http://www.mindfulnessdc.org/reports/newsletters/pastnewsletters) and download the Fall 2006 issue.*

Last fall, I attended a three day conference in Washington DC that brought together the His Holiness The Dalai Lama with the world's leading neuroscientists, academics and "contemplatives" focused on how mindfulness and meditation practice can alter the brain's structure and functions. They presented scientific evidence from 25 years of research in North America and Europe. Their conclusions collectively represent the largest body of work demonstrating how science and mindfulness practices converge to enhance and improve our mental, psychological and physical health and general well-being.

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***Repeated and focused meditation can affect the brain's structure and change its networks through plasticity, because it affects parts of the brain that control compassionate emotions.***

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Dr. Ralph Snyderman, a professor at the Duke University School of Medicine, presented scientific data proving mindfulness practices affect the brain's structure positively. According to Dr. Snyderman, the power of technology and science are insufficient to treat suffering alone. His research demonstrated that specific mind training has proven effects on the brain and can improve "the human condition" of suffering and pain. For example, repeated and focused meditation can affect the brain's

structure and change its networks through plasticity, because it affects parts of the brain that control compassionate emotions. It also minimizes pain and suffering because it coordinates oscil-

lation between different brain areas through focused thought patterns. Furthermore, it minimizes destructive emotion such as prolonged stress, anger, fear and shock that causes changes in the mind, and therefore in the body.

A major theme focused on how meditation positively affects mental and physical disorders, especially in addressing

See "Depression," p. 4

**The Washington Mindfulness Community**, formed in 1989, is composed of men and women inspired by the teachings of Buddhism and Thich Nhat Hanh, a contemporary Vietnamese Zen Master, peace activist, and writer.

The mission of the Community is to nurture mindfulness, love, and understanding among those who participate in its activities and in the larger society. Members come together to meditate, to deepen our understanding of the practice of mindfulness, to encourage and inspire each other through dharma discussions and mindful actions, to support each other through difficult times and to celebrate the joys and wonders of life. Recognizing that each person's peace and happiness are interwoven with the peace and happiness of others, the WMC offers activities that welcome the children, families, and companions of members. The Community also organizes retreats, lectures, and other public events; supports communities and causes in accord with the Community's mission; and works with groups that relieve suffering through compassionate actions.

“When we say, ‘I take refuge in the sangha,’ it means we put our trust in a community of fellow practitioners who are solid. A teacher can be important and also the teachings, but friends are the most essential element of the practice. It is difficult or even impossible to practice without a sangha.”

From *Touching Peace*, by Thich Nhat Hanh.

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**Newsletter editors:** Mary Hillebrand and Joseph Byrne; masthead design and graphics provided by Cindy Sherwood.

*Unsolicited contributions and comments are welcome and encouraged!*

## **In the Classroom**, from p. 1

to “get back” at a child for misbehavior, no anger, raised voice, use of authority as a weapon, threats, treating questions or misunderstandings as “stupid” can be tolerated. Can a teacher be perfect in this practice? No, most of us will lose our tempers, become frustrated, experience the “last straw” effect of one more student getting up and moving around during an important moment of instruction. We are human too and have blocks to treating others equally, such as pride, defensiveness, impatience. When I do violate my own rule of respect, the students know it right away. What can I do to make things right? The key I found that works and restores a respectful atmosphere is making amends for violating the only rule in the classroom – respect. I have to have the humility to admit to the whole class (if the violation occurred in the whole group) that I have broken our one rule. Teenagers, I have found, respond to an apology from a teacher with graciousness and forgiveness. They are amazingly able to let go of grudges. Then harmony is restored, and they are willing to also admit to mistakes without being judged or dismissed. It tickles me that students who end up failing a course will still greet me with warmth in the hallways and take elective courses from me.

Many times in the “Peace Studies” or “Diversity and Community” courses we can discuss educational violence in the “Every Child Left Behind” legislation and other examples of violence and non-peace in the lives of people in the classroom. We are able to develop even deeper levels of confidentiality, openness and respect based on mutual understanding. This has happened in almost all of these elective courses, partly because the courses are chosen by the student, partly because they are older (usually juniors and seniors) and mainly because deeper levels of personal sharing are requested of them. I explain in the first session that they will be expected to explore the nature of violence and conflict in the world, in their communities and school, in their families and within their own hearts. We will explore solutions to violence and ways to deal with conflict and to make peace in all those areas. If individuals are not willing to share personal experiences, they have the option of taking another course, using journaling as the primary method of expression or “passing” when a topic brings up something difficult to share in a group setting. Respect for the individual's comfort level and desire to share or not share is critical.

When discussing issues in “Peace Studies” such as war, poverty, genocide, female genital mutilation, the oppression of women, domestic and child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, corporate violence to the public health and to the environment, government abuse of power, global warming, capital punishment, animal abuse, etc., students can become

See “In the Classroom,” p. 3



## From Susan Hadler

Last night, I walked down 16th Street to join a vigil for peace in Lafayette Square facing the White House. Wednesday night, George Bush announced the escalation of troops in Iraq, and the vigil was a way to support and encourage all who are working to end the war.

Earlier in the day, I was waiting for my passport picture to be developed and I began talking with a woman from Costa Rica who was also waiting. She said, “When George Bush leads Americans to Hell, they follow him right into Hell.”

I was thinking of that when we were asked to stand in silence for 10 minutes facing the White House and think about Bush, about the war, about ourselves and the world. I was aware of feeling deeply

frustrated that Bush seems not to listen to the suffering that causes and is caused by war. I thought of the family I grew up in. No one listened to the suffering in our family caused by the war that took my father’s life. Then, as I looked at the lighted windows of the White House, I let myself breathe and get in touch with the fear, the hatred, the pride that lived in that house, that lived in George Bush and that was creating such Hell in the world. I breathed in this burning pain and breathed out understanding as much as I could, standing in the January night holding a candle and a sign. My own pain and anger began to soften. I felt grateful that there were so many of us standing together, adding a little light and warmth to the cold. Sankar was there too, standing beside me warming his hands in the flame of his candle.

After the silence, the names of those from the Washington area that had died in Iraq were read. With each name I thought of my father who was killed in World War II at the age of 25. I have

lived 37 years longer than he lived. I’ve had 37 more years to tend my family, grow and ripen, learn and offer what I have, and enjoy the beauty and wonders of life than my young father had when his life was cut short. My heart broke with each name, knowing the unbearable loss.

When the last of a heartbreakingly long list of names was read, we were asked to extinguish our candles.

I walked back up 16th Street to my room holding the big yellow and orange sign in front of me: IRAQ ESCALATION? WRONG WAY. A woman closing her shop stopped me to talk about her anger, her sadness, and her fears for her own country of Iran. The connection felt good. We were each a little less alone. As I walked up the street holding the sign I thought that maybe tomorrow I’ll just walk around the city holding this sign and stop and listen to those who need to talk. So we don’t feel so alone. So we can find each other and flame the fires of understanding and peace.

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### **In the Classroom,** *from p. 2*

overwhelmed (as I can) by the amount of suffering in the world. I have begun in the last few years to make sure that there is some time in each class for laughter, silence, music and watering the seeds of joy, hope, imagination and beauty. We need the balance of looking deeply at the reality of suffering in order to seek solutions to stopping violence and oppression. But we also need to help our children not become overwhelmed by sadness, grief and hopelessness when they look deeply at the realities of war and poverty. They need to hear personal stories like those of students who survived the genocide of Rwanda or the poverty of Guatemala and India. Such students are often present in the very class discussing the topics or can easily come from another class in our large, multinational student body.

These students become the most important part of my support sangha in my workplace. They encourage me to continue to help them look at difficult issues while keeping their hearts light and happy. In doing so, my capacity for listening deeply, especially to the suffering in their lives, is strengthened. My joy at being alive, breathing, here and now, in this present moment is watered. My hope that any problem created by the carelessness, greed and cruelty of human beings like myself can also be solved by the mindfulness, generosity

and love of human beings like myself. We have all harmed by our mindlessness and can all heal by our mindfulness.

In some classes such as “Peace Studies,” there has even been an opportunity to introduce meditation directly as a way to achieve some personal peace and to reduce stress in our lives and the lives of those around us. It is often helpful to have another practitioner to conduct the instruction on breathing, relaxation of the body, “raisin meditation” or “Clementine meditation.” Most students are happy to consume any form of food in any way possible. The idea of “stopping, relaxing and breathing” has caught on so much in some classes that students request at least 5 minutes of meditation at the beginning or end of class as a way of preparing for or recovering from the hubbub of the hallways. We share and discuss our experience and research on the value of meditation in thinking, studying and test-taking. On beautiful spring days we have practiced walking meditation from the classroom to a nearby hillside where we enjoy watching clouds and blue skies in silence. Some students have enjoyed the meditation and stress reduction exercises so much that they initiated a weekly after school meditation club led by students. What a joy to find and build sangha wherever we are in our daily lives!

**CHECK OUT:** [www.mindfuled.org](http://www.mindfuled.org) for more!

## dharMedia

by Mary Hillebrand

I was fooling around on the Internet a while ago, following links that sounded interesting, avoiding whatever work I “should” have been doing at the time. Turns out, I was right where I “should” have been at that moment – I stumbled upon a web site called Zencast.org, which offers podcasts of talks from various teachers, free for downloading. Yes, Thich Nhat Hanh was among them. So, of course, I downloaded several of Thay’s dharma talks, for listening while I dharma walk (the dogs, that is).

The first one I listened to was a lesson in non-attachment. The podcast’s subject was not exactly non-attachment. Its title was “Refreshing Our Hearts,” and I recognized it once I got over my initial surprise at the format of the podcast itself. *That* was my lesson in non-attachment! When I pressed “play” on my aptly named “Zen player,” which is similar to an iPod, this mellow music with a new age-y beat flowed into my ear. The faint voice of Thay started slowly repeating “Let us visualize...” from somewhere within the heathery, swirling image forming in my mind. Thay’s voice sounded like it was coming from down deep in an aluminum-walled well, breathy and echoing, which soon brought to mind the image of Darth Vader – not something I ever expected to conjure from Thay’s voice!

This went on for a minute or so, to the point where I half expected Thay to deliver a dharma rap in time to the music at any moment. Instead, he expanded the sentence to “Let us visualize a lake in the highland among mountains” and seemed to begin his dharma talk, music and funky beat continuing behind his oddly distorted voice. But after four or five sentences, as if reading my mind, another person spoke, sounding so much like Darth Vader that my ears reflexively strained for the swoosh of his light saber. “The ultimate experience. The ultimate... Zencast!” Darth Vader said, startling me out of my reverie of Thay wearing a shiny black helmet.

Then someone started chanting/singing and the music became a little more complex, with some violins joining the dreamy mix. I felt so disoriented. “This is not what I expected,” I thought to myself. “It’s not the Spartan recording I’m used to hearing, unadorned except for the occasional cough or chuckle from the audience.” And this was only the introduction. “What’s next?” I wondered warily. Again, as if reading my mind, the sound in my ear shifted to Thay, up close, normal voice, no background noise, delivering that old favorite teaching about us being clear water, reflecting what is real. It was like the podcast creator said to me, “Okay, joke’s over. I was just testing you.” Funny thing is, by that point, I had actually let go of my attachment to the sound of the recorded dharma talks I had become accustomed to at the Vihara and was ready to try to enjoy this funky new version, even if Thay might start rapping at any moment.

Good thing, too, because suddenly in the middle of his talk, someone sang some kind of folksy rock ‘n’ roll song... a nice, sorta mellow one, but... rock ‘n’ roll?!? “I ordered a dharma talk! What’s the deal with the interruption?” I wondered. Thay talked some more, interrupted later by someone chant/singing in French – Sister Chan Khong, I later learned from the web site. Then more talk from Thay, followed by one last, brief, startling word from Darth Vader, reminding me that the recording came from Zencast.org.

If you’re looking for free dharma talks online, this is one of many places to go – Googling “dharma talk podcast” will bring up plenty of choices. I haven’t taken a chance on a second recording from this site yet, so I can’t say if they all feature such an unusual format. But I can tell you it was fun to be shaken out of my mindset, even if I didn’t realize I needed it.

*Write your own dharMedia review! Books, magazines, CDs, films, podcasts, web sites.... If you stumble upon it, share it with the sangha. E-mail your review to [communications@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:communications@mindfulnessdc.org).*

### **Depression**, from p. 1

depression. Mental training decreases clinical depression and, while not a cure, it acts as a supplement or enhancement.

According to fifteen years of studies by Dr. Robert Sapolsky, of Stanford University’s Department of Neurological Sciences, and Dr. Wolf Singer, of the Frankfurt Institute of Advanced Studies of Neuroscience, in Germany, true depression returns and becomes a chronic disease, due to either genetic/hereditary factors or significant loss, such as death, divorce, job or other life traumas. These factors create the “out of control” conditions that may

require medication and cognitive therapy. This occurs when one experiences a state of severe imbalance between mind and body conditions, resulting in extreme suffering that originates in the brain. Symptoms include active anguish that leads to a feeling of numbness in the mind and may also be felt in the body as severe physical pain. Some brain areas become overactive while others become numb, a brain imbalance that triggers the clinical state known as depression.

However, Drs. Sapolsky and Singer differentiated between healthy suffering and depression. The release of the hormone

Dopamine can be a response to anticipation as a source of healthy anxiety, which in turn may transform pain into a more advantageous form of suffering or stimulation. This often leads to mind practices whose outcomes are associated with high-energy, peak performance, which is understood as stimulating, positive stress.

On the other hand, brain pattern responses such as numbness vs. overactivity may vary in each individual. The brain is especially reactive to “sadness triggers” such as personal circumstances of loss and can experience extreme and

*See “Depression,” p. 5*

## Depression, from p. 4

different depressive mind states in response. In some people, the brain may try to correct its "sadness" with over-thinking and excessive rumination as a coping mechanism, while others may experience extreme inactivity or numbness. This is sometimes known as being in shock due to a delayed emotional reaction.

Scientific evidence also shows that relapse into a depressive state is typical and even cyclical. For example, a sad emotion in some people more easily triggers a depressive state, often within 12 to 15 months of the previous phase, while in another person, sadness remains an emotional state from which he or she may recover.

Approaches to depression personalities include cognitive therapy, which helps patients retrain the mind in its responses and belief systems, and medication, which works on the body first in order to reach the mind as a secondary effect.

However, neuroscientists also argued that retraining the mind can be achieved through meditation and mindfulness techniques, because they work through the mind first to reach the body as a secondary effect. The reverse of medication's effects, this technique is called "Mindfulness Cognitive Therapy" (MCT).

MCT, outline in clinical research by Dr. Zindel Segal, of the University of Toronto's Psychiatry Department, is used in psychotherapy to work with one's thought patterns. First, MCT turns down overactive areas of the brain focused on the self and shifts overly self-focused belief systems. It provides tools to identify and deal with thoughts and mental formations and thereby reduces internally-focused activity. Second, it turns up numb areas of the brain related to empathy and external focus. Such mindfulness stress-

reduction techniques are effective regardless of one's mood because they help move one into intentional "mind approaches."

MCT restores balance to the brain, thereby providing a path out of mental and physical suffering. It affects specific brain areas that regulate and trigger hormones in both men and women. These techniques average a recovery rate of 60 percent in patients who use mindfulness practices and do not use medication. While mindfulness techniques require discipline and focus in the patient, scientific evidence demonstrates their effectiveness. They can bring attention back to the present moment and develop awareness and clarity about one's thought patterns and mental formations.

MCT also focuses on one's relationship to the outside world. It emphasizes self-awareness techniques and insight-exploration because it helps coordinate the balance among body, senses and mindfulness. It increases one's capacity

for empathy and connecting with others. For those whose depression reaches an intense physical suffering, body and mind scans using meditation help relieve this suffering and restore balance over the medium to long term.

Both Dr. Esther Sternberg, of the National Institutes of Health, and author Jon Kabat-Zinn agreed that there are many mindfulness and meditative practices to further access this technique, such as body scans, present moment scans and sound scans in the environment of meditation. Other techniques include mindful stretching and yoga, deep breathing and shifting one's relationship to external events: They are not about me nor my core identity but reflect uncontrollable external conditions. This realization, that they are not about me, may be the most difficult exercise. This is the ultimate challenge in our ability to let go and surrender to what we do not control.\*

### Goals of Mindfulness Cognitive Therapy

- \* Re-establish balance in the brain
- \* Re-establish healthy, yet detached relationship to the external world
- \* Enhance well-being above normal to reduce imbalance when suffering is triggered

## Silence, by Sankar

Even the waters are silent  
On this winter day.  
The trees without a leaf to stir  
Watch the wavelets  
In lonely desolation.

The air almost solid.  
The swamps frozen around the feet  
of the trees.  
There is nothing to distract,  
Nothing to focus on.  
The mind is quiet as the air.

The birds  
Are nowhere to be seen.  
The planes out of Dulles  
in the near distance  
merely underline the stillness.

As I walk on the towpath  
My feet grind on the gravel.  
I slow down  
to quiet the footsteps,  
and enjoy your presence.

You live in the motionless trees  
And the dark expanse of empty  
space.  
You envelop everything,  
becoming invisible  
save for such glimpses.

The body gets old.  
Even desire dies.  
But another winter day  
I will be here to meet you.  
You are eternal.

The bottom line agreement of more than 25 years of research among neuroscientists, academics and contemplatives, including The Dalai Lama: Mindfulness-based stress reduction and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy alleviate mental anguish and physical suffering common in depression. In extreme cases, they should be seen as a complement, not a substitute, to medication and other forms of therapy.

\*One helpful source on this subject is "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz.

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## ***RETREAT! RETREAT! WHAT TO WATCH FOR THIS SPRING & SUMMER***

### **Thich Nhat Hanh & Plum Village Community U.S. Tour**

**Aug. 12-17:** Stonehill College, Easton, Mass.

**Aug. 18:** Public talk, Boston

**Aug. 21-26:** YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park, Colo.

**Aug. 29:** Public talk, Denver

**Sept. 6-23:** Deer Park Monastery, Escondido, Calif.

**Sept. 29:** Public talk, Pasadena, Calif.

[www.deerparkmonastery.org/us\\_tour/eastcoast.html](http://www.deerparkmonastery.org/us_tour/eastcoast.html)

**May 4-6:** Still Water MPC Community Retreat, Charter Hall, near Perryville, Md., [info@StillWaterMPC.org](mailto:info@StillWaterMPC.org)

**June 8-10:** Willow Branch Sangha Annual Retreat, led by monastics of Green Mountain Dharma Center/Maple Forest Monastery, St. Davids, Pa.; [www.willowbranch.org](http://www.willowbranch.org)

**September:** WMC Fall Retreat, date and location to be determined, e-mail ideas to [retreats@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:retreats@mindfulnessdc.org)

*The WMC Scholarship Fund enables sangha members who need financial assistance to attend retreats or visit Plum Village to deepen their practice (and thereby the practice of the sangha). To apply, sangha members should write a letter to the committee explaining their financial situation and what they propose to do with the subsidy. Certain rules apply; up to 50 percent subsidy will be provided. Contact the Board of Trustees for more information, [trustees@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:trustees@mindfulnessdc.org).*

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## ***Mindful Weeding: A Retreat Memory***

While weeding at New Hamlet in Plum Village, I began to understand the complexities of mindfulness. My two sons, our helper and I arrived there last May, during the hiatus before the summer retreats. We had long had the pleasure of knowing our wonderful sangha sister, Sr. Pine, as I had been with the Washington Mindfulness Community for eight years. But this was our first time to Plum Village, to its beautiful peace, hills, and monastic life.

Always active, on the second day I noticed that weeds had overgrown the flowerbed behind our room, and as my four year old son Kaja often helped me with this at home, I thought it would be a lovely project to do together. So we spent one morning cheerfully weeding. I recognized the European weeds as ones we knew from the Czech Republic, although I spent an equal amount of time pointing out what Kaja should not pull.

The next morning, we asked who was the guardian of these beautiful flowers and were pointed to Sr. Anh Nghiem. She graciously accepted our help. She said while Kaja and I weeded next to her she would arrange stones for the borders. We watched her in wonder as she carefully picked up each stone, examined it, cradled it, and placed it next

to or on top of others. She explained she wanted to make the stones harmoniously frame the flowerbeds, especially around the meditation hall, and that she had to find the right fit. Often she would unhurriedly move one stone from bed to bed to bed, until she was satisfied.

I was so happy to be put on 'work duty' with others on three or four large flowerbeds. I thought that with so many of us, we would certainly make great progress on cleaning them up. Now, I am from Manhattan, but my years of following and being on retreat with Thay have blunted much of my 'Type A' achievement-oriented activity. Or so I thought. As I looked at the rather greatly-overgrown beds, I knew that it would take us all of our work hours during our two week stay to get them properly weeded. I and several other practitioners set to our task with some tempered vigor. Kaja joined me sometimes in the afternoon as well, and we laughed as we pulled together. We enjoyed the slower pace and the time for each other.

After about a week of such joint, joyous daily work, I arrived one afternoon to the back flowerbed nearest the meditation hall. I found Sr. Anh Nghiem, patiently moving her beloved stones around. We breathed together, enjoying

the late spring air and light clouds, before I felt I had to head "to work." This time, Sister accompanied me to where I knelt down. She watched me for some minutes. Then she gently suggested that I consider pulling out one weed at a time.

"One weed?!" screamed the thought in my head. "One weed at a time?! This will take me forever if I do one weed at a time!" I sat back on my heels in amazement. I simply couldn't fathom releasing myself from the yoke of looked-forward-to-work, from the joy of accomplishment. In that moment, I began realizing that accomplishment could also be a beautiful prison. I left weeding that day, as well as the next day. But the third, fourth and fifth days I tried as Sister had said. It was remarkably hard, but I noticed details about individual weeds I had not until then, and I even started to mourn their passing from life into death at my hands.

Though I have much to learn, I have not weeded the same way. Since that summer's day, I have tried to be more mindful. To stop in mid-action, to breathe, to look around and feel, to appreciate what is happening. On summer days with my heart filled with love for my boys, that is easier. Lately, I've been through a difficult time in my life and have noticed that "present moment, wonderful moment" has been more

*See "Weeding," p. 7*

## ***Want to Deepen Your Connection to the Sangha? It's Easier Than You Think!***

The Washington Mindfulness Community is run by committee. No, really! Below are the two elected bodies, as required by law for non-profit organizations, and five committees that help our community stay organized, supportive, and connected to each other. Learn about specific WMC projects at [www.mindfulnessdc.org/reports/comgath031107.html](http://www.mindfulnessdc.org/reports/comgath031107.html), then e-mail a committee to find out you can get involved!

### **WMC Board of Trustees**

[trustees@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:trustees@mindfulnessdc.org)  
(2-year elected terms)

Manages the business and affairs of the WMC, seeking input from the larger community for major decisions. The Trustees are entrusted by the community with holding the well-being of the community in their heart and with embodying in their actions the needs of the community as a whole.

Carrie Rose    Sankar Sitaraman  
James Figetakis    Brigitte Pichot

### **Retreat Committee**

[retreats@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:retreats@mindfulnessdc.org)  
(volunteer)

Organizes and manages three community retreats per year, seeking input from sangha members, making contact with host sites, signing up participants and planning retreat formats.

Joann Malone    Jindra Cekan  
Alan Heyman

### **WMC Practice Council**

[practicecouncil@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:practicecouncil@mindfulnessdc.org)  
(2-year elected terms)

Oversees the spiritual life of the community and supports the mindfulness practice of community members; looks to the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh and Dharma teachers in his tradition, and seeks input from the larger community, before making substantive changes to established practices.

Elisabeth Dearborn    Susan Hadler  
Richard Brady    Steve Sidley

### **Operations Committee**

[operations@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:operations@mindfulnessdc.org)  
(volunteer)

Supports Sunday evening WMC meetings and other events, through tasks such as coordinating bell inviters, greeters and newcomers' evening guides, and managing the WMC library.

Brigitte Pichot    Richard Brady  
Carrie Rose    Susan Hadler  
\*\* additional member needed for  
newcomer orientation scheduling

### **Communications Committee**

[communications@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:communications@mindfulnessdc.org)  
(volunteer)

Manages the WMC web site, publishes the quarterly newsletter and sangha directory, and conducts other projects to help keep members informed and connected.

Mary Hillebrand    Joseph Byrne  
Nick Chang    Azara Turaki

### **Community Care Committee**

[community@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:community@mindfulnessdc.org)  
(volunteer)

Organizes community-building projects such as Second Body Practice and book groups and provides support for individuals and groups of congregants who are experiencing difficulties.

Steve Sidley    Carolyn Blumele  
Susan Hadler    Lisa Fleige

Sangha Reflections *welcomes and encourages your submissions.*

*E-mail text, photos and art to:*  
[communications@mindfulnessdc.org](mailto:communications@mindfulnessdc.org)

## **Weeding, from p. 6**

elusive for me, as I don't particularly like the present moment of sadness, or anger or uncertainty. Until, that is, I realize that if I just label the circumstances as "change" they bear less weight on my soul – less fixed and immutable, as they seem now, as Thay, Pema Chodron and others say so eloquently. Lately I've come to appreciate that in the moments I just stop to breathe I am, in fact, tending to one weed at a time. One thought, one sensation, one urge, one whatever. That is the amazingly distilled lesson Sister Anh Nghiem taught me in that flowerbed and the other amazing monastics at Plum Village and sangha brothers and sisters elsewhere teach me.

Namaste, Sister Anh Nghiem; Namaste, Thay.  
— Jindra Cekan  
(Awakened Joy of the Heart)

### ***Where Is The Truth***

*Where is the truth?  
Or does it slip and slide about?  
Depending on how you look at it?  
From the top as correct.  
From the bottom, oppressive.  
From the right, the way it has been.  
From the left, open to freedom.  
But there is a certain truth I know,  
When I am breathing in,  
I know I am breathing in an in-breath.  
When I am breathing out,  
I know I am breathing out an out-breath.*



~ Bill Menza, Sarasota, Florida, January 23, 2007

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## MINDFULNESS PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WASHINGTON AREA

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### *Washington Mindfulness Community Schedule*

www.mindfulnessdc.org; info@mindfulnessdc.org

Most events take place at the Washington Buddhist Vihara, 5017 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, D.C.

**Meditation and Dharma Discussion:** Every Sunday from 7-9:15 p.m. Sitting and walking meditation and a brief taped dharma talk by Thich Nhat Hanh are followed by a discussion. Everyone is welcome.

**Potluck Social Evening:** First Sunday of each month, 5:15 p.m. at the Vihara.

**Live Dharma Talks or extended sitting:** Second Sunday.

**Dharma Class:** Third Sunday of each month, 5:45-6:45 p.m., topics and facilitators vary.

**Newcomer Orientation:** Last Sunday of each month, from 6-6:45 p.m.; a time to ask questions about sitting and walking meditation, bells, gathas and other aspects of mindfulness practice. Open to all but especially for newcomers. Informal orientations for other Sundays can be arranged via contact info above.

**Annual Spring Rebirth Ceremony:** Sunday, May 5.

**Annual Ceremony of Remembrance:** Sunday, Nov. 4.

**Community Gathering:** Meeting of WMC members to discuss business and community issues, followed by mindful potluck; Next gathering: TBA

**Retreats:** September, Fall Retreat, Charter Hall, near Perryville, Md.

### *Still Water Mindfulness Practice Center Schedule*

www.stillwatermpc.org; 301-270-8353

Most events take place at Crossings: Center for the Healing Traditions, Suite 202, 8505 Fenton Street, Silver Spring

**Morning Sitting Meditation and Reading:** Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 6:30-7:30 a.m.

**Sitting Meditation and Other Practices:** Thursday evening, 7:30 p.m.

**Retreats:** May 4-6, Spring Community Retreat; Oct. 5-7, Silent Retreat; Nov. 9-11, Fall Community Retreat; Charter Hall, near Perryville, Md.

**Workshops:** "A Calm Mind and a Joyful Heart: Learning to Attune and to Choose," June 3, 2-5 p.m., Circle Yoga, Washington, D.C.

"Finding Our True Home: Mindfulness Meditation and the Present Moment," June 10, 1-4 p.m., Follow Your Heart Yoga, Germantown, Md.

**Baltimore Fresh Breeze Sangha:** Practice Day: Saturday, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Govans Presbyterian Church, 5824 York Road, Baltimore; 410-323-2180, freshbreeze@earthlink.net

### *Mindfulness Practice Center of Fairfax Schedule*

www.mpcf.org; 703-938-1377

Most events take place at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, 2709 Hunter Mill Rd., Oakton, Va.

**Morning Sitting & Walking Meditation:** Monday through Friday, 8:15-9:15 a.m.

**Noon meditation:** Thursday, 12-12:45 p.m.

**Afternoon Deep Relaxation:** Thursday, 3:30-4:15 p.m.

**Mindful Movement:** Tuesday & Thursday, 4:15-5 p.m.

**Children's Program:** Monday, 4-4:45 p.m.

**Evening Meditation:** Thursday, 7:30-9 p.m.

**Days of Mindfulness:** May 12, June 9, July 14; half-days May 26, June 23, July 28. Please reserve a spot in advance. Suggested donation: \$30-50.

**Classes:** "Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction,"

Mondays, April 16-June 18, 7-8:30 p.m.

"Deep Relaxation and Healing Movements," Wednesdays, April 18-June 6, 7:30-9 p.m.

**Retreats:** May 18-20, Oct. 19-21, and Dec. 7-9, Claymont Court, W.Va.

**Capitol Hill Mindfulness Practice:** Sitting meditation:

Mon., 7 a.m., and Fri., 6:50 a.m.; Capitol Hill Yoga, 221 5th St. NE; 202-544-0011. Sitting meditation, reading, and discussion: Wed., 7:30-8:30 p.m.; Healing Arts of Capitol Hill, 320 G St. NE; 202-544-9389 ext. 3.

**Annapolis Mindfulness Practice:** Practice Evening:

Thursday, 7-8:30 p.m.; Beginners: Sunday, 8:45-9:45 a.m.; Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, 333 Dubois Rd., Annapolis, Md.; mpg@uuc-md.org

**Columbia Mindfulness Practice:** Practice Evening: first Monday of the month, 7-8:30 p.m. Kittamaquidi Community Church, 5410 Leafreader Way, Columbia, Md.; 410-730-4712.

**Lotus Heart Mindfulness Community:** Practice Day: Sunday, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Breathe Books, 810 W. 36th St., Baltimore; 410-833-6685, www.lotusheartsangha.com

**Boat of Compassion (Thuyen Tu) Sangha:** Mindful day: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., first Saturday of each month except April and October; Giac Hoang Temple, 5401 16th St. NW, Washington, D.C., 202-829-2423; thuyentu@crpcv.org, www.crpcv.org/thuyentu

**Arlington Mindfulness Practice:** Practice Evening: Monday, 7:30 p.m.; 703-820-1524, pfguerrero@aol.com.