

The Mindfulness Trainings
of Thich Nhat Hanh &
the International Plum Village
Community of Engaged Buddhism

Plum Village

THICH NHAT HANH FOUNDATION

planting seeds of compassion

The Five Mindfulness Trainings represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. They are a concrete expression of the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, the path of right understanding and true love, leading to healing, transformation, and happiness for ourselves and for the world. To practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to cultivate the insight of interbeing, or Right View, which can remove all discrimination, intolerance, anger, fear, and despair. If we live according to the Five Mindfulness Trainings, we are already on the path of a bodhisattva. Knowing we are on that path, we are not lost in confusion about our life in the present or in fears about the future.

The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings are the very essence of the Order of Interbeing, a community comprising monastics and lay people who have committed to living their lives in accord with the Trainings. These trainings allow us to touch the nature of interbeing in everything that is, and to see that our happiness is not separate from the happiness of others. Interbeing is not a theory; it is a reality that can be directly experienced by each of us at any moment. The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings help us cultivate concentration and insight which free us from fear and the illusion of a separate self.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings

Reverence For Life

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life. Seeing that harmful actions arise from anger, fear, greed, and intolerance, which in turn come from dualistic and discriminative thinking, I will cultivate openness, non-discrimination, and non-attachment to views in order to transform violence, fanaticism, and dogmatism in myself and in the world.

True Happiness

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to practicing generosity in my thinking, speaking, and acting. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others; and I will share my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. I will practice looking deeply to see that the happiness and suffering of others are not separate from my own happiness and suffering; that true happiness is not possible without understanding and compassion; and that running after wealth, fame, power and sensual pleasures can bring much suffering and despair. I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude and not on external conditions, and that I can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that I already have more than enough conditions to be happy. I am committed to practicing Right Livelihood so that I can help reduce the suffering of living beings on Earth and reverse the process of global warming.

True Love

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. Knowing that sexual desire is not love, and that sexual activity motivated by craving always harms myself as well as others, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without true love and a deep, long-term commitment made known to my family and friends. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. Seeing that body and mind are one, I am committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of my sexual energy and cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness – which are the four basic elements of true love – for my greater happiness and the greater happiness of others. Practicing true love, we know that we will continue beautifully into the future.

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and compassionate listening in order to relieve suffering and to promote reconciliation and peace in myself and among other people, ethnic and religious groups, and nations. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am committed to speaking truthfully using words that inspire confidence, joy, and hope. When anger is manifesting in me, I am determined not to speak. I will practice mindful breathing and walking in order to recognize and to look deeply into my anger. I know that the roots of anger can be found in my wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in myself and in the other person. I will speak and listen in a way that can help myself and the other person to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to utter words that can cause division or discord. I will practice Right Diligence to nourish my capacity for understanding, love, joy, and inclusiveness, and gradually transform anger, violence, and fear that lie deep in my consciousness.

Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutrients, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings

The First Mindfulness Training: *Openness*

Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, we are determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even Buddhist ones. We are committed to seeing the Buddhist teachings as guiding means that help us learn to look deeply and develop understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill or die for. We understand that fanaticism in its many forms is the result of perceiving things in a dualistic and discriminative manner. We will train ourselves to look at everything with openness and the insight of interbeing in order to transform dogmatism and violence in ourselves and in the world.

The Second Mindfulness Training: *Non-Attachment to Views*

Aware of the suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, we are determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. We are committed to learning and practising non-attachment from views and being open to others' insights and experiences in order to benefit from the collective wisdom. Insight is revealed through the practice of compassionate listening, deep looking and letting go of notions rather than through the accumulation of intellectual knowledge. We are aware that the knowledge we presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life and we will observe life within and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives.

The Third Mindfulness Training: *Freedom of Thought*

Aware of the suffering brought about when we impose our views on others, we are determined not to force others, even our children, by any means whatsoever – such as authority, threat, money, propaganda, or indoctrina-

tion – to adopt our views. We are committed to respecting the right of others to be different, to choose what to believe and how to decide. We will, however, learn to help others let go of and transform narrowness through loving speech and compassionate dialogue.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training: *Awareness of Suffering*

Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help us cultivate understanding and compassion, we are determined to come home to ourselves, to recognise, accept, embrace and listen to our own suffering with the energy of mindfulness. We will do our best not to run away from our suffering or cover it up through consumption, but practise conscious breathing and walking to look deeply into the roots of our suffering. We know we can only find the path leading to the transformation of suffering when we understand the roots of our suffering. Once we have understood our own suffering, we will be able to understand the suffering of others. We are committed to finding ways, including personal contact and using the telephone, electronic, audio-visual and other means, to be with those who suffer, so we can help them transform their suffering into compassion, peace and joy.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training: *Compassionate, Healthy Living*

Aware that happiness is rooted in peace, solidity, freedom and compassion, we are determined not to accumulate wealth while millions are hungry and dying, nor to take as the aim of our life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure, which can bring much suffering and despair. We will practise looking deeply into how we nourish our body and mind with edible foods, sense impressions, volition and consciousness. We are committed not to gamble or to use alcohol, drugs or any other products that bring toxins into our own and the collective body and consciousness such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books and conversa-

tions. We will consume in a way that preserves compassion, peace, joy and well-being in our bodies and consciousness and in the collective body and consciousness of our families, our society and the Earth.

The Sixth Mindfulness Training: *Taking Care of Anger*

Aware that anger blocks communication and creates suffering, we are committed to taking care of our energy of anger when it arises, to recognising and transforming the seeds of anger that lie deep in our consciousness. When anger manifests, we are determined not to do or say anything, but to practise mindful breathing or mindful walking to acknowledge, embrace and look deeply into our anger. We know that the roots of anger are not outside of ourselves but can be found in our wrong perceptions and lack of understanding of the suffering in ourselves and the other person. By contemplating impermanence, we will be able to look with the eyes of compassion at ourselves and those we think are the cause of our anger and to recognise the preciousness of our relationships. We will practise Right Diligence in order to nourish our capacity of understanding, love, joy and inclusiveness, gradually transforming our anger, violence and fear and helping others do the same.

The Seventh Mindfulness Training: *Dwelling Happily in the Present Moment*

Aware that life is available only in the present moment, we are committed to training ourselves to live deeply each moment of daily life. We will try not to lose ourselves in dispersion or be carried away by regrets about the past, worries about the future, or craving, anger or jealousy in the present. We will practise mindful breathing to be aware of what is happening in the here and now. We are determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wondrous, refreshing and healing elements that are inside and around us, in all situations. In this way, we will be able to cultivate seeds of joy, peace, love and understanding in ourselves, thus facilitating the work of transformation and healing in our consciousness. We are aware that hap-

piness depends primarily on our mental attitude and not on external conditions and that we can live happily in the present moment simply by remembering that we already have more than enough conditions to be happy.

The Eighth Mindfulness Training: *True Community & Communication*

Aware that lack of communication always brings separation and suffering, we are committed to training ourselves in the practice of compassionate listening and loving speech. Knowing that true community is rooted in inclusiveness and in the concrete practice of the harmony of views, thinking and speech, we will practise to share our understanding and experiences with members in our community in order to arrive at collective insight. We are determined to learn to listen deeply without judging or reacting and refrain from uttering words that can create discord or cause the community to break. Whenever difficulties arise, we will remain in our Sangha and practise looking deeply into ourselves and others to recognise all the causes and conditions, including our own habit energies, that have brought about the difficulties. We will take responsibility for all the ways we may have contributed to the conflict and keep communication open. We will not behave as a victim but be active in finding ways to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

The Ninth Mindfulness Training: *Truthful and Loving Speech*

Aware that words can create happiness or suffering, we are committed to learning to speak truthfully, lovingly and constructively. We will use only words that inspire joy, confidence and hope as well as promote reconciliation and peace in ourselves and among people. We will speak and listen in a way that can help ourselves and others to transform suffering and see the way out of difficult situations. We are determined not to say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people, nor to utter

words that might cause division or hatred. We will protect the joy and harmony of our Sangha by refraining from speaking about the faults of another person in their absence and always ask ourselves whether our perceptions are correct. We will speak only with the intention to understand and help transform the situation. We will not spread rumours nor criticize or condemn things of which we are not sure. We will do our best to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may make difficulties for us or threaten our safety.

The Tenth Mindfulness Training: *Protecting and Nourishing the Sangha*

Aware that the essence and aim of a Sangha is the practice of understanding and compassion, we are determined not to use the Buddhist community for personal power or profit or transform our community into a political instrument. However, as members of a spiritual community, we should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice. We should strive to change the situation, without taking sides in a conflict. We are committed to looking with the eyes of interbeing and learning to see ourselves and others as cells in one Sangha body. As a true cell in the Sangha body, generating mindfulness, concentration and insight to nourish ourselves and the whole community, each of us is at the same time a cell in the Buddha body. We will actively build brotherhood and sisterhood, flow as a river and practise to develop the three real powers – love, understanding and cutting through afflictions – to realise collective awakening.

The Eleventh Mindfulness Training: *Right Livelihood*

Aware that great violence and injustice have been done to our environment and society, we are committed not to live with a vocation that is harmful to humans or nature. We will do our best to select a livelihood that contributes to the wellbeing of all species on Earth and helps realise our ideal of understanding and compassion. Aware of economic, political and social

realities around the world, as well as our interrelationship with the ecosystem, we are determined to behave responsibly as consumers and citizens. We will not invest in or purchase from companies that contribute to the depletion of natural resources, harm the Earth and deprive others of their chance to live.

The Twelfth Mindfulness Training: *Reverence for Life*

Aware that much suffering is caused by war and conflict, we are determined to cultivate nonviolence, compassion and the insight of interbeing in our daily lives and promote peace education, mindful mediation and reconciliation within families, communities, ethnic and religious groups, nations and in the world. We are committed not to kill and not to let others kill. We will not support any act of killing in the world, in our thinking, or in our way of life. We will diligently practise deep looking with our Sangha to discover better ways to protect life, prevent war and build peace.

The Thirteenth Mindfulness Training: *Generosity*

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, we are committed to cultivating generosity in our way of thinking, speaking and acting. We will learn better ways to work for the wellbeing of people, animals, plants and minerals and will practise generosity by sharing our time, energy and material resources with those who are in need. We are determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. We will respect the property of others, but will try to prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

The Fourteenth Mindfulness Training: *Right Conduct*

[For lay members]: Aware that sexual desire is not love and that sexual relations motivated by craving cannot dissipate the feeling of loneliness

but will create more suffering, frustration and isolation, we are determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual understanding, love and a deep long-term commitment made known to our family and friends. Seeing that body and mind are one, we are committed to learning appropriate ways to take care of our sexual energy and to cultivating loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness for our own happiness and the happiness of others. We must be aware of future suffering that may be caused by sexual relations. We know that to preserve the happiness of ourselves and others, we must respect the rights and commitments of ourselves and others. We will do everything in our power to protect children from sexual abuse and to protect couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. We will treat our bodies with compassion and respect. We are determined to look deeply into the Four Nutriments and learn ways to preserve and channel our vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realisation of our bodhisattva ideal. We will be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world and will meditate upon their future environment.

[**For monastic members**]: Aware that the deep aspiration of a monk or a nun can only be realized when he or she wholly leaves behind the bonds of sensual love, we are committed to practicing chastity and to helping others protect themselves. We are aware that loneliness and suffering cannot be alleviated through a sexual relationship, but through practicing loving kindness, compassion, joy and inclusiveness. We know that a sexual relationship will destroy monastic life, will prevent us from realizing our ideal of serving living beings, and will harm others. We will learn appropriate ways to take care of sexual energy. We are determined not to suppress, to mistreat our body or to look upon our body as only an instrument, but to learn to handle our body with compassion and respect. We are determined to look deeply into the Four Nutriments in order to preserve and channel our vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of our bodhisattva ideal.

The Two Promises

There is also a version of these ethical trainings for children; we call these “The Two Promises.” In our experience, children and parents have been very excited about the Two Promises. They are:

I vow to develop understanding in order to live peacefully with people, animals and minerals.

I vow to develop my compassion in order to protect the lives of people, animals and minerals.



For more information, visit:

<https://thichnhathanhfoundation.org/the-path-of-happiness-plumvillage.org/mindfulness-practice/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/orderofinterbeing.org>

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