Reading Guide 1: The Four Noble Truths

How to Practice Guy Gibbon
MZMC gibbo001@umn.edu

This reading guide is for your convenience. It is not required reading. Some of you may find it useful in reviewing the content of Thich Nhat Hahn’s *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*.

A. Key Teachings

Chapter One. Entering the Heart of the Buddha

1. Buddha was not a god. He was a human being like you and me, and he suffered just as we do. (3)
2. The Buddha said, over and over, “I teach only suffering and the transformation of suffering.” (3)
3. Suffering is the means the Buddha used to liberate himself, and it is also the means by which we can become free. (3) The Buddha called suffering a Holy Truth because our suffering has the capacity of showing us the path to liberation. Embrace your suffering, and let it reveal to you the way to peace. (5)
4. Without suffering, we cannot grow. (5)

Chapter Two. The First Dharma Talk

1. “… nothing can be by itself alone, … everything has to inter-be with everything else” (the teaching of interdependence) (6)
2. “I have seen that all beings are endowed with the nature of awakening.” (the notion of an inherent Buddha nature) (6)
3. The Four Noble Truths are the existence of suffering, the making of suffering, the possibility of restoring well-being, and the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to well-being. (the Buddha’s core teaching along with the Middle Way) (6)
4. With his first dharma talk, the Buddha put into motion the wheel of the Dharma, the Way of Understanding and Love. It is up to us, the present generation, to keep the wheel of the Dharma turning for the happiness of the many. (7)
5. Three points characterize the *Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma* (*Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*): (1) the teaching of the Middle Way, (2) the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, and (3) engagement in the world. (7-8)
6. The teachings of the Buddha are not intended to help us escape from life, but to help us relate to “ourselves” and to the world as thoroughly as possible. (The teaching of engagement in the world) (8)
Chapter Three. The Four Noble (Wonderful) Truths

1. The Four Noble Truths are not something to argue about. They are something to practice and realize. *(Both* action and conceptual thought are required) *(9)*

2. The First Noble Truth is suffering *(dukkha).* We have to recognize and acknowledge the presence of this suffering and touch it *(i.e., meditate on it).* *(9)*

3. The Second Noble Truth is the origin, roots, creation, or arising of suffering. After we touch our suffering, we need to look deeply into it to see how it came to be. *(The practice of looking deeply)* *(9)*

4. The Third Noble Truth is that healing is possible. You cease from creating suffering by refraining from doing the things that make you suffer *(and the Noble Eightfold Path is a set of practices that help you do this)* *(11)*

5. The Fourth Noble Truth is the path that leads to refraining from doing the things that cause us to suffer *(the Noble Eightfold Path, the Path of Eight Right Practices): Right View, Right Thinking, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Diligence, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.* *(11)*

Chapter Four. Understanding the Buddha’s Teachings

1. When we hear a dharma talk or read a sutra, our only job is to remain open *(i.e., to not judge its content by comparing the content to our own ideas).* *(12)*

2. While reading a sutra or listening to a dharma talk or to a friend, don’t work too hard. Be like the earth. When the rain comes, the earth only has to open herself up to the rain. *(12)*

3. A teacher cannot give you the truth. The truth is already in you *(your Buddha nature).* You only need to open yourself – your body, emotions, and mind – so that the teaching will penetrate your own seeds of understanding. *(12-13)*

4. When reading the sutras, it is necessary to compare them and look deeply into the meaning of each, for the Buddha’s teachings were transmitted only orally for 400 years. Distortions in transmission and the introduction of new teachings most likely obscure just what the Buddha said. *(14-15)*

5. A sutra or Dharma talk is not insight in and of itself. It is a means of presenting insight using words and concepts. Do not mistake “the finger for the moon.” *(17)*

6. Do not look for theories *(“Is there a self?” “Was the Buddha a god or a man?”)*, but for ways to remove obstacles that produce suffering. *(18)*

Chapter Five. Is Everything Suffering?

1. It is a mistake to see all things as suffering. According to the Buddha, we should recognize suffering when it is present and recognize joy when suffering is absent. *(19-21)* To succeed in the practice, we must stop trying to prove everything is suffering *(in fact, we must stop trying to prove anything).* If we touch the truths of suffering with our mindfulness, we will be able to recognize and identify our specific suffering, its specific causes, and the way to remove those causes and end our suffering. *(23)*
2. An example of the mistake of seeing all things as suffering is the Three Kinds of Suffering doctrine, which sees everything on Earth as one of three kinds of suffering (of unpleasant feelings, of the coming apart of composite things, or of change). (19)

3. TNH does not consider suffering to be one of the Three Dharma Seals, because it is not a “mark” of all things like impermanence and nonself are. It can be brought to an end. (21) (We review the Three Dharma Seals in Chapter 18)

Chapter Six. Stopping, Calming, Resting, Healing (24-27)

1. Buddhist meditation has two aspects, shamatha (“stopping”) and vipashyana (“looking deeply”), the latter of which can bring us insight and liberate us from suffering and afflictions. But “stopping” is fundamental, for if we cannot stop, we cannot have insight. (24)

2. The first function, then, of meditation is to learn the art of stopping (shamatha), which means learning to recognize and be present with our habit energy in order to stop this course of destruction. Mindfulness (of breathing, of walking, etc.) is the energy that allows us to recognize our habit energy and prevent it from dominating us. (24-25)

3. The second function of shamatha is to learn to calm our body and mind and look deeply at them. We do this by learning the art of breathing in and out, stopping our activities, and calming our emotions. TNH summarizes the process in five stages: (1) recognition (“I know that anger is in me”), (2) acceptance (I accept that I am angry), (3) embracing (I embrace my anger mindfully like a mother/father embraces her/his child), (4) looking deeply (I look deeply to understand what has brought this anger), and (5) insight (I understand the causes of this anger). (25-26)

4. The third function of shamatha is to learn the art of allowing our body and mind to rest. The Buddha said, “My Dharma is the practice of non-practice.” Practice in a way that does not tire you out. Calming allows us to rest, and resting is a precondition for healing. (27)

5. Stopping, calming, and resting are preconditions for healing – and individuals, communities, and nations need healing. (27)

Chapter Seven. Touching Our Suffering

1. In the Buddha’s first sermon (Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma), he set out the Four Noble Truths and “three turnings of the wheel” for each of them (which adds up to twelve turnings of the wheel, which is often symbolized by a wheel with twelve spokes). To understand the Four Noble Truths, not just intellectually but experientially, we have to practice the twelve turnings of the wheel. (28-29)

2. The “three turnings of the wheel” are recognition (we must, first of all, recognize, acknowledge, and identify a situation, such as “we are suffering”), encouragement (we must then look deeply into the situation and try to
understand its causes), and **realization** (at last we understand the causes of the situation). (See Figure Two on p. 30). (29-31)

3. There are four kinds of nutriments (causes) whose misuse can bring about mental or physical suffering. These are **edible food** (we must be able to distinguish between what is healthful and what is harmful, so we must eat mindfully), **sense impressions** (toxins can enter our body through the six senses, so we have to be mindful about what we ingest in this broader sense), **intention** (deep-seated habit energies can drag us into the fire of our suffering, so we have to look deeply into the nature of our intention), and **consciousness** (it’s easy to feed our consciousness with greed, hatred, ignorance, suspicion, and pride, so we have to be mindful about what our consciousness is “eating”). (31-37)

4. When we practice the first turning of the First Noble Truth, we recognize suffering as suffering (Our practice is to be with our suffering and take good care of it.). When we practice the first turning of the second Noble Truth, we look deeply with mindfulness into the nature of our suffering to see what kinds of nutriments we have been feeding it (Until we begin to practice the Second Noble Truth, we tend to blame others for our unhappiness.). Just seeing the causes of our suffering lessens our burden.

5. In the second stage of the Second Noble Truth, “Encouragement,” we see clearly that real happiness is possible if we stop ingesting the nutriments that cause us to suffer – and that only by strong intention not to do things in the same way can we keep the wheel in motion. Mindfulness is the energy that can help us stop. When the cause of suffering has been seen, healing is possible.

6. In the third turning of the wheel of the second Noble Truth, “Realization,” we not only vow but also we actually stop ingesting the nutriments that create out suffering. At this stage, “When hungry, I eat. When tired, I sleep” (Chop wood, carry water). You only have to be yourself. (39-40)

**Chapter Eight. Realizing Well-Being** (41-46)

1. When you are suffering, look deeply at your situation and find the conditions for happiness that are already there, already available. Practicing mindfulness helps us learn to appreciate the well-being that is already there. (41)

2. The first turning of the Third Noble Truth is the “Recognition” of the possibility of the absence of suffering and the presence of peace. We see that well-being is possible. (42)

3. The second turning is to “Encourage” us to find peace and joy, and to do this we have to touch deeply the things that bring us peace and joy. Put your hands in the earth (your suffering). Face the difficulties and grow new happiness. Learn the art of cultivating joy. (42-43)

4. Practice like this, and you come to the third turning of the Third Noble Truth, the “Realization” that suffering and happiness are not two. When you reach this stage, your joy is no longer fragile. It is true joy. (43)

5. The Fourth Noble Truth is the way out of suffering. Practicing the first turning of the wheel of the Fourth Noble Truth, you “Recognize” that the Eightfold Path can lead you out of suffering, but you do not yet know how to practice. (43)
6. In the second turning, you “Encourage” yourselves to practice this path by learning, reflecting, and practicing. In this stage, you see that the path has everything to do with your real difficulties in life. A practice that does not directly concentrate on your own suffering is a path you do not have time to follow. (43)

7. The third turning of the wheel of the Fourth Noble Truth is the “Realization” that you are practicing this path. When you consider any practice (using a koan, for example), you are now aware that if it doesn’t have anything to do with your real problems that it may not be a path you need. It may be just an escape. (44)

8. It is important to understand the interbeing nature of the Four Noble Truths. When we look deeply into (meditate on) any one of the Four Truths, we see the other three. (45)

9. The practice is to face our suffering and transform it in order to bring about well-being. We need to study the Noble Eightfold Path and learn ways to put it into practice in our daily life (which we do during the next two classes). (46)

B. Review Questions

Chapter One. Entering the Heart of the Buddha

- What is “the basic condition” for us to enter the Buddha’s heart, and for the Buddha to enter our heart? What does TNH mean by “to enter the heart”?
- Why is suffering the means by which we can become free?
- Why should you not dwell only in your suffering? What should you be doing instead?
- In this chapter, who or what is the Buddha?

Chapter 2. The First Dharma Talk

- TNH says that three points characterize the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma. What are they? What does each mean? Why is each of fundamental importance in Buddhism?
- Why in a world of suffering, perhaps paradoxically, is the Discourse on the Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma filled with joy and hope?

Chapter Three. The Four Noble (Wonderful) Truths

- Briefly describe each of the Four Noble Truths. How do you understand them?
- How do we go about “feeling into our suffering” to see how it came to be?
- What does it mean, “to touch our suffering”?
- What does “right” mean in the Path of Eight Right Practices?

Chapter Four. Understanding the Buddha’s Teachings

- How should we approach the understanding of the Buddha’s teachings? Why?
- Why were some of the Buddha’s teachings distorted before they were written down? How do we guard against misunderstandings?
What issues arise in reading the sutras?

Chapter Five. Is Everything Suffering?

- Is everything suffering?
- According to TNH, why should suffering not be included among the Three Dharma Seals?

Chapter Six. Stopping, Calming, Resting, Healing

- What does it mean to do something mindfully?
- Buddhist meditation has two aspects, shamatha (“stopping”) and vipashyana (“looking deeply”). What’s the difference. Which is more fundamental?
- How does the stopping-calming-resting-healing process work?

Chapter Seven. Touching Our Suffering

- TNH introduces three “turnings of the wheel” (recognition, encouragement, and realization) that are used in practice “to touch” each of the Four Noble Truths. What is the purpose of each of these twelve turnings and how do you go about “touching” each Truth this way? (See Figure 2 on p. 30)
- There are four “nutriments” whose misuse can cause suffering. What are they and how do they cause suffering? (This is an important question. Don’t ignore it.)

Chapter Eight. Realizing Well-Being

- Why when we look deeply into any one of the Four Truths do we see the other three?
- Why do we need suffering in order to see the path?

C. Meditations

TNH stresses repeatedly in The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching that an intellectual understanding of concepts like suffering and joy by itself is insufficient practice; you have to learn to “touch” the concepts experientially (mindfully) as well. The following two “Recognition” meditations serve as an introduction to “sitting with” (the mindful contemplation of) core concepts in Buddhism. Work with one or both this week.

Meditation 1. Touching Your Suffering

The Buddha Shakyamuni’s second insight (Truth) involves the origin of suffering. Suffering comes from emotional reactivity, what TNH refers to in Chapter Six as “habit energy.” The purpose of this meditation is to identify the “habit energy” that drives a pattern of behavior that leads to a sense of discomfort (suffering). The steps in this meditation are:
Choose a pattern of behavior that causes difficulty in your life, that you know or suspect is habituated.

Push on the behavior during meditation by imagining behaving differently.

Observe the arising and the operating of reactions. Do not try to counteract or suppress the reactions. Just observe them mindfully.

Observe how reactions are organized around an imperative:

“Must have this, can’t have that” or
“Must be this way, can’t be that way.”

Observe how reactions serve the imperative.

Perhaps the reason you frequently interrupt people may not be aggression but fear of not being heard. Shift your observation to this deeper pattern. A pattern (a “habit energy”) is a process, a sequence of reactions operating to serve a specific imperative. In this meditation you learn how to identify the imperative that drives a pattern that leads to suffering. Once the imperative is identified, you recognize the operation of the pattern in daily life more easily. Other familiar imperatives are: “Must be productive, can’t waste time”; “Must always be agreeable”; “Must be funny in conversation to be liked.” What are your (most annoying) imperatives?

**Meditation 2. Realizing Well-Being**

In Chapter Eight, TNH says, “Practicing mindfulness helps us learn to appreciate the well-being that is already there.” The following meditation helps us realize the well-being (the happiness) “that is already there.” Remember that the first turning of the Third Noble Truth is the “Recognition” of the possibility of the absence of suffering and the presence of peace. We see that well-being is possible.

Sit or lie down in a comfortable place where you won’t be disturbed. Close your eyes and let yourself relax but remain mentally alert.

Meditate on happiness.

Just let whatever thoughts and images come to your mind as they will. They may be about people or memories or dreams. Some will be more intense. Others only peripheral. They will doubtless be multitudinous. However many there are, let them come. (You may never have realized how much happiness and potential happiness you have inside you.)

Eventually, your memories and thoughts of happiness finally run their course and no more will come to mind. When this happens, you may suddenly feel detached from them. This is because they were only a kind of happiness. According to TNH, this is “the kind of joy that is just covering up suffering.”

Take a deep breath and let it out slowly.

Now, turn your senses within and meditate in mindfulness on what real happiness is. Just sit in mindfulness and see what arises.

You will know when you find it, because suddenly there it will be – and perhaps you will feel a deep, inner glow (a recognition, really).

Slowly relax and bring your meditation to a close. This inner glow of happiness (this realization) will continue with you for some time. Take a moment and attune
you to it, especially during those times in your life when you’re in need of a bit of happiness in your life.

This meditation will help you learn “the art of cultivating joy.” (43)

We will elaborate on how to “touch” core Buddhist teachings like the six paramitas, the Three Jewels, and the Five Aggregates in class and in eight or more additional meditations in the next four classes.

D. Terms and Expressions

Suffering (dukkha) (1)
The bodhi tree (2)
The morning star (2)
The Deer Park in Sarnath (2)
The five ascetics (2)
Kondanna (the One Who Understands) (2)
Maras (2)
Sutra (discourse) (2)
the wheel of the Dharma (2)
the Middle Way (2)
the Four Noble Truths (2)
The Eightfold Path (2)
Samyak: complete, perfect awakening (3)
Dukkha: the existence of suffering (First Noble Truth) (3)
Samudaya: the making of suffering (Second Noble Truth) (3)
Nirodha: the possibility of restoring well-being (Third Noble Truth) (3)
Marag: the Path that leads to well-being (Fourth Noble Truth) (3)
Mahayana Buddhism (4)
The Southern Transmission (4)
The Northern Transmission (4)
Bodhisattva (4)
Shamatha (“Stopping”) (6)
Vipashyana (looking deeply”) (6)
Mindfulness (6)
Reading Guide 2: Right View, Right Thinking, Right Mindfulness, and Right Speech

This reading guide is for your convenience. It is not required reading. Some of you may find it useful in reviewing the content of Thich Nhat Hanh’s *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*.

A. Key Teachings

Chapter 9. Right View

1. Right View is (1) a deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths, (2) faith and confidence that there are people who have been able to transform their suffering, (3) knowing which of the four kinds of nutriments that we have ingested have brought about what has come to be, and (4) the ability to distinguish wholesome seeds from unwholesome seeds. (51)

2. The practice of mindfulness helps us identify the seeds in our store consciousness. According to Buddhist psychology, store consciousness is a field in which the seeds of suffering, sorrow, fear, and anger, and seeds of happiness and hope (the range of human emotions) are present in us in a dormant state, at least at the beginning. By watering these seeds, they sprout, and when they sprout they manifest in our mind consciousness. When they do, they become stronger (i.e., they become reactive patterns of behavior or “habit energies”). So we have to become aware of the seeds in our store consciousness through meditation, recognize which seeds are wholesome, and concentrate on watering those seeds (what TNH calls “selective touching”). (51-52)

3. [To clarify a bit, according to the Yogacara school of Buddhist psychology our consciousness is divided into eight parts: mind consciousness (mano vijnana), store consciousness (alaya vijnana), and six forms of vijnana (consciousness or awareness) corresponding to the six senses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, taste-consciousness, touch-consciousness, bodily consciousness, and mental consciousness.]

4. Watering just wholesome seeds is not as straightforward as it may seem, for we can be easily fooled by what we perceive. As the Buddha said, “Where there is perception, there is deception.” He also taught that since most of our perceptions are erroneous, most of our suffering comes from wrong perception. The problem is subject-object thinking in which we believe that flowers and the moon lie outside ourselves independent of our consciousness. The source of our perception, our way of seeing, lies in our store consciousness, so it is important to look deeply and mindfully at our perceptions and know their source. To practice is to go
beyond ideas (to recognize that all views are wrong views), so you can arrive at
the suchness of things (and this needs some explaining). (53-56)

5. We are the gardener. We have to learn how to water the wholesome seeds that are
in us so that they will bloom into the flowers of Right View through mindful
living. No one can do this for us. (54-55)

6. The eight practices of the Noble Eightfold Path nourish each other. Through
practice, our view becomes more “right.” (58)

Chapter Ten. Right Thinking

1. Right View is the foundation of Right Thinking (Thought, Resolve), which is the
speech of our mind. Right Thinking makes our speech clear and positive by
reflecting the way things are. Right Thinking means that we bring mindfulness
(critical reflection in meditation) to the thinking process. We use cognitive
processes (thinking) to uncover and correct problems in our practice and in our
living. (59)

2. The practice of Right Thinking is not easy, for we are easily distracted and we are
often fooled by our perceptions. (59)

3. Thinking in early stages of meditation has two parts: initial thought (“This
afternoon I have to turn in an essay for literature class”) and developed thought
(“Am I doing the assignment correctly?”). When we are in deeper contact with
reality, we are free of words and concepts (this teaching needs some unpacking).
(60)

4. There are four practices related to Right Thinking: (1) “Are You Sure?” (Wrong
perceptions cause incorrect thinking and unnecessary suffering.); (2) “What Am I
Doing?” (The question helps you be right here washing the dishes! Ask yourself,
What am I doing? often.); (3) “Hello, Habit Energy” (We tend to stick to our
habits, even the ones that cause us to suffer; When we recognize this, we only
need to say, “Hello, habit energy,” and make good friends with our habitual
patterns of thinking and acting.); and (4) Bodhichitta (the deep wish to cultivate
understanding in ourselves in order to bring happiness to many others; It is the
motivating force for the practice of mindful living.). (60-62)

5. The easiest way to keep unwholesome thoughts from arising is to live in a
wholesome environment, a community that practices mindful living. (62-63)

6. When you practice Right View and Right Thinking, you dwell deeply in the
present moment. (63)

7. The ideals of the Eightfold Path are traditionally divided into three “trainings”
that mark the progressive path to nirvana: morality (right speech, right action,
right livelihood), meditation (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration),
and the cultivation of wisdom or insight (right view, right thinking).

Chapter Eleven. Right Mindfulness

1. Right Mindfulness is the ability to be completely present in each and every
moment, aware of all that one is doing, thinking, and feeling. Right Mindfulness
accepts everything without judging or reacting. It is inclusive and loving. The practice is to come back to the present moment throughout the day. (64)

2. Practicing the Seven Miracles of Mindfulness helps us lead a happy and healthy life, transforming suffering and bringing forth peace, joy, and freedom. The Seven Miracles are: (1) to be present, (2) to make the other present, too, (3) to nourish the object of our attention, (4) to relieve the other’s suffering, (5) looking deeply, (6) understanding, and (7) transformation of our own suffering and the suffering of the world. The first four miracles of mindfulness belong to the first aspect of meditation (Shamatha – stopping, calming, resting, and healing) and the last three to the second aspect (vipashyana). (65-67)

3. In the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutra), the Buddha offers four objects for our mindfulness practice: our body, our feelings, our mind, and the objects of our mind. (67-68)

4. Mindfulness of the body practices include: (1) noting all of our body’s positions and movements (“mere recognition”), (2) recognizing all of our body’s parts (“body scanning”), and (3) seeing all the elements it is made of (earth, water, fire, and air). (68-70)

5. Mindfulness of our feelings involves observing our feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral) as they flow by and disappear. Calling a feeling by its name, such as “joy,” “happiness,” “anger,” or “sorrow,” helps us identify and see it deeply. The practice of not clinging to or rejecting feelings is an important part of meditation. (71-73)

6. Mindfulness of the mind involves being aware of our “mental formations,” which are ideas that come to mind, such as “flower” and “dog,” and states of mind like “hatred,” “agitation,” “happiness,” and “doubt.” Mental formations can be wholesome or unwholesome, so practice recognizing and acknowledging mental formations as they arise. Look deeply into them, and see their nature of impermanence and interbeing. (73-75)

7. TNH mentions many other meditations in this chapter, including mindfulness of phenomena, investigation of dharmas, a Six Elements practice, several Six Realm practices, a Two Realms meditation, and the Threefold Training of precepts, concentration, and insight. Since he doesn’t say much about their practice, we will note them and pass on. (76-82)

8. A last mindfulness meditation that we should practice is contemplation on interdependence, which is a meditation on the interbeing of subject and object. (80-81)

9. Sitting and watching our breath is a wonderful practice, but it is not enough. For transformation to take place, we have to practice mindfulness all day long. Without understanding, our actions might cause others to suffer. We may be motivated by the desire to make others happy, but if we do not have understanding, the more we do, the more trouble we may create. (81-83)

Chapter Twelve. Right Speech

1. The classical explanation of Right Speech is: (1) Speaking truthfully, (2) Not speaking with a forked tongue, (3) Not speaking cruelly, and (4) Not exaggerating
or embellishing. The practice of Right Speech is to try to change our habits so that our speech arises from the seed of Buddha that is in us, and not from our unresolved, unwholesome seeds. (84-85).

2. Speech is the way for our thinking to express itself aloud. When our thoughts leave our mind in the form of speech, if Right Mindfulness continues to accompany them, we know what we are saying and whether it is useful or creating problems. (86)

3. Deep listening is at the foundation of Right Speech. If we cannot listen mindfully, we cannot practice Right Speech. So train yourself to listen with compassion. Right Mindfulness helps us slow down and listen to each word. Whether we say something kind or respond too hastily, we hear what we are saying. (86-93)

4. Open your mouth and speak only when you are sure you can use calm and loving speech. You have to train yourself to be able to do this. (89)

5. The practice of telephone meditation can help us cultivate Right Speech. Place the following gatha near your phone and recite it before speaking on the phone: Words can travel thousands of miles/May my words create mutual understanding and love/May they be as beautiful as gems/as lovely as flowers. (91-92)

6. As our meditation practice deepens, we are much less caught in words. (92)

B. Review Questions

Chapter 9. Right View

- What is Right View?
- As the gardener of our consciousness, we have to recognize which seeds are wholesome and which are unwholesome. How do we do this? What are the “seeds”? How can our perceptions fool us?

Chapter Ten. Right Thinking

- What is Right Thinking?
- When would you use each of the four practices related to Right Thinking?
- According to the Buddha, what is the easiest way to keep unwholesome thoughts from arising?

Chapter Eleven. Right Mindfulness

- What is Right Mindfulness?
- What are the seven Miracles of Mindfulness? How can you incorporate them into your practice?
- What does it mean to say, “The object of our mind can be a mountain or a rose. We believe these things exist outside of us as separate entities, but these objects of our perceptions are us”?

Chapter Twelve. Right Speech
Most basically, what is the practice of Right Speech?
Give several examples from your own experience of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others.
In regard to Right Speech, what is involved in the Fourth Mindfulness training?

C. Meditations

The first two of these meditations are exercises in mindfulness from TNH’s book, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation* (1976). Work with one or all three of these meditations this week. Before you begin these meditations, reread carefully what it means to be mindful. The goal of these meditations is to touch mindfulness deeply.

**Meditation 1. Washing the Dishes**

Wash the dishes relaxingly, as though each bowl is an object of contemplation. Consider each bowl as sacred, perhaps as the body of the Buddha. Follow your breath to prevent your mind from straying. Do not try to hurry to get the job over with. Consider washing the dishes the most important thing in life. Washing the dishes is meditation. If you cannot wash the dishes in mindfulness, neither can you meditate while sitting in silence. This is a meditation in the First Miracle of Mindfulness in which you learn to be fully present with the ‘other,’ whether another person or a dish.

**Meditation 2. Mindfulness of the Positions of the Body**

This can be practiced in any time and place. Begin to focus your attention on your breath. Breathe quietly and more deeply than usual. Be mindful of the position of your body, whether you are walking, standing, lying, or sitting down. Know where you walk; where you stand; where you lie; where you sit. Be mindful of the purpose of your position. For example, you might be conscious that you are standing in a snowstorm in order to enjoy the beauty of the snowfall, to practice breathing, or just to stand. If there is no purpose, be mindful that there is no purpose. This is a “mindfulness of the body in the body” meditation (the first of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness).

**Meditation 3. Telephone Meditation**

Every time the phone rings or you are about to make a phone call, take two breaths. On the first breath detach from the task you are doing (reading, preparing a meal, etc.). On the second breath place your hand on the phone and recite these words, *Words can travel thousands of miles/May my words create mutual understanding and love/May they be as beautiful as gems/as lovely as flowers*. Now pick the phone up and center yourself on the person you will be speaking to. This gatha expresses the determination to practice Right Speech. Even as you say the words, your mind already becomes more peaceful and your insight more clear.
D. Terms and Expressions

- store consciousness (9)
- bodhichitta (10)
- afflictions (kleshas) (11)
- dharmas (11)
- the Six Elements (11)
- precepts (11)
- gatha (11)

Notes
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A. Key Teachings

Chapter Thirteen. Right Action

1. Right Action is the practice of touching love and preventing harm, the practice of nonviolence toward ourselves and others. The basis of Right Action is to do everything in mindfulness. (94)

2. Right Action is closely linked with the first, second, third, and fifth Five Mindfulness Trainings. The Five Mindfulness Trainings help protect our body, mind, family, and society. The practice of the Five Mindfulness Trainings is a form of love, and a form of giving. The most precious gift we can offer our society is to practice the Five Mindfulness Trainings. The Fourth Mindfulness Training (the practice of deep listening and loving speech) was reviewed in Chapter 12. (94)

3. The First Mindfulness Training is about protecting the lives of human beings, animals, vegetables, and minerals. “Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals ….” (94)

4. The Second Mindfulness Training is to prevent the exploitation by humans of other living beings and of nature. It is also the practice of generosity. “Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals ….” (94-95)

5. The Third Mindfulness Training is to protect children and adults from sexual abuse, to preserve the happiness of individuals and families. Too many families have been broken by sexual misconduct. When you practice the Third Mindfulness Training, you protect yourself and you protect families and couples; you help people feel safe. “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 ….” (95-96)

6. The Fifth Mindfulness Training is about mindful consumption. “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 ….” (96-97)
7. To commit yourself to the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to begin the work of a bodhisattva, doing it not for yourself alone but for everyone. (97-98)

Chapter Fourteen. Right Diligence

1. Right Diligence or Right Effort is the smart use of our energy to help us realize the Noble Eightfold Path; “It is not because we practice hard [got to sit every day!] that we can say that we are practicing Right Diligence.” “When we practice sitting and walking meditation in ways that cause our body and mind to suffer, our effort is not Right Diligence and is not based on Right View.” (99)

2. The four practices usually associated with Right Diligence are called the Fourfold Right Diligence. They are:

3. “preventing unwholesome seeds in our store consciousness that have not yet arisen from arising,”

4. “helping the unwholesome seeds that have already arisen to return to our store consciousness,” (When unwholesome seeds have arisen, we have to take care of them.)

5. “finding ways to water the wholesome seeds in our store consciousness that have not yet arisen and asking our friends to do the same,” and

6. “nourishing the wholesome seeds that have already arisen so that they will stay present in our mind consciousness and grow stronger.” (100)

7. Here, “unwholesome” means not conducive to liberation or the Path. If we embrace unwholesome seeds with Right Mindfulness, sooner or later they will lose their strength and return to our store consciousness. Likewise, of we embrace wholesome seeds with Right Mindfulness, sooner or later they grow stronger. (100)

8. Practicing diligently should bring you joy. “The practice is to smile as soon as we wake up, recognizing this day as an opportunity for practicing.”

9. If you suffer during your practice or find no joy in it, it probably is not Right Diligence. If we lack Right Diligence, it is because we have not yet found a way to practice that is true to us, or have not felt deeply the need to practice.

Chapter Fifteen. Right Concentration

1. The practice of Right Concentration is to cultivate a mind that is one-pointed. There are two kinds of concentration, active and selective. (105)

2. In active concentration, the mind dwells on whatever is happening in the present moment, even if it changes. We welcome whatever comes along, nonjudgmentally; we just dwell in the present moment with all our being. (105-106)

3. When we practice selective concentration, we choose one object (our breath, a mantra, etc.) and hold onto it. (106)

4. We concentrate (practice samadhi) to make ourselves deeply present in the moment, to become the moment. Living each moment deeply, sustained concentration comes naturally and that, in turn, gives rise to happiness and insight. (106-107)
5. TNH provides a brief overview of the nine levels of meditative consciousness, the first four of which (the Four Dhyanas) deal with form and the last five with formlessness. Although they are not emphasized, it is worth thinking a bit about the last five levels since they are referred to a fair amount in advanced classes. (106-110)

6. The object of the fifth level of concentration is limitless space. When we begin to practice this concentration, everything seems to be space. But as we practice more deeply, we see that space does not have a separate, independent existence. According to the teaching of the Buddha, nothing has a separate self. Space and everything else inter-are. (108)

7. The object of the sixth level of concentration is limited consciousness. At first, we see only consciousness, but then we see that consciousness also inter-is. (108)

8. The object of the seventh level of concentration is nothingness. With normal perception, we see flowers, fruit, and tables, and we think they exist separately of one another. But when we look more deeply, we see that they too inter-are (the fruit is in the flower, and the flower, the cloud, and the earth are in the fruit). We go beyond outward appearances (“signs”) and come to “signlessness” (the nonexistence of signs). (108)

9. The eight level of concentration is that of neither perception not non-perception. We recognize that everything is produced by our perceptions, which we now realize are perceptions of signs. Since we no longer believe in the reality of signs, our perception becomes wisdom (this needs some unpacking). (108-109)

10. The ninth level of consciousness is the cessation of ignorance in our feelings and perceptions (that is, we recognize and accept the “mystery of being,” the fact that we live in a world constructed by our senses, and that “As soon as we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, we open ourselves to suffering”).

Chapter Sixteen. Right Livelihood

1. Right Livelihood is trying to have a vocation that is beneficial to humans, animals, plants, and the earth, or at least minimally harmful. More technically, this means earning a living without needing to transgress any of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.

2. A job that involves killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, or selling drugs or alcohol is not Right Livelihood.

3. We cannot succeed at having a Right Livelihood one hundred percent, but we can resolve to go in the direction of compassion and reducing suffering. And we can resolve to help create a society in which there is more Right Livelihood and less wrong livelihood.

B. Review Questions

Chapter Thirteen. Right Action

- What is Right Action? What is its basis?
On p. 98, Hanh says, “A good teacher only needs to observe a student walking or
inviting a bell to sound to know how long he has been in the practice.” What do
you think?

Chapter Fourteen. Right Diligence

- What is Right Diligence (Effort)?
- How does the story about making a tile into a mirror relate to the practice of Right
Diligence? (99-100)
- What four practices are usually associated with Right Diligence? (100)

Chapter Fifteen. Right Concentration

- What is the practice of Right Concentration? Elaborate.
- What are the Four Dhyanas?
- What does practicing Samadhi entail?

Chapter Sixteen. Right Livelihood

- What is Right Livelihood? Elaborate.

C. Meditations

The Buddha taught many concentration practices. Work on one or both of the following
editations this week.

Meditation 1. Everything Changes

The purpose of this meditation is to know that everything we experience is impermanent.
Simply sit with the question, “Is there anything that doesn’t change?” rest attention on the
breath and pose the question. Think of change in the world (stars, planets, oceans, trees,
animals, human societies), the body (our hair, fingernails, muscles, abilities, height,
weight, shape), and personality (likes and dislikes, beliefs and ideas about the world, how
we think and how we interpret experience). This meditation wakes us up to the
understanding that everything is impermanent.

Meditation 2. Contemplation on Who You Are

Sit in a dark room by yourself, or alone by a river at night, or anywhere else where there
is solitude. Begin to take hold of your breath. Give rise to the thought, “I will use my
finger to point at myself,” and then instead of pointing at your body, point away in the
opposite direction. Contemplate seeing yourself outside of your bodily form.
Contemplate seeing your bodily form present before you – in the trees, the grass, and
leaves, the river. Be mindful that you are in the universe and the universe is in you: if the
universe is, you are; if you are, the universe is. There is no birth. There is no death.
is no coming. There is no going. Maintain a half smile. Take hold of your breath. Contemplate for 10 to 20 minutes.
This reading guide is for your convenience. It is not required reading. Some of you may find it useful in reviewing the content of Thich Nhat Hanh’s *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*.

### A. Key Teachings

#### Chapter Seventeen. The Two Truths

1. According to Buddhism, there are two kinds of truth, relative or worldly truth (the world around us as seen through concepts) and absolute truth (the world around us as encountered without concepts). Nirvana means extinction – first of all, the extinction of all concepts and notions. Our concepts about things prevent us from really touching them. We have to destroy our notions if we want to touch the real rose.

2. Liberation is the ability to go from the world of signs to the world of true nature. We need the relative world of the wave (of concepts), but we also need to touch the water, the ground of our being (the absolute truth), to have real peace and joy. We shouldn’t allow relative truth to imprison us and keep us from touching absolute truth. Looking deeply into relative truth, we penetrate the absolute. Relative and absolute truths inter-embrace. Both truths, relative and absolute, have a value. “The deeper level of practice is to live our daily life in a way that we touch both the absolute and the relative truth.”

3. Our training prepares us to live fully in the relative world, while being firmly (anchored) in the absolute world. We do this by working with meditations that help us realize that suffering and happiness are “not two,” that suffering is made entirely of things that are not suffering. Perhaps paradoxically, don’t get caught in theories or ideas, such as saying that suffering is an illusion or that we have to “transcend” both suffering and joy. Just stay in touch with what is actually going on, and you will touch the true nature of suffering and the true nature of joy. Although this idea may seem simple in concept, its deep realization takes committed practice.

4. Confusion is generated in Buddhism when we encounter seemingly conflicting statements, such as the Buddha’s teaching in the Four Noble Truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path, and sentences in the *Heart Sutra* that tell us that there is no suffering, no cause of suffering, and so on. But in the first the Buddha is speaking in terms of relative truth and that latter is a teaching in terms of absolute truth. Watch for these differences – but be aware that we enter the door of practice through relative truth (for example, we start our practice by recognizing the presence of happiness and suffering, and try to go in the direction of happiness, but as we practice …). You encounter absolute truth by walking the path of relative truth.

#### Chapter Eighteen. The Three Dharma Seals

1. The Three Dharma Seals (the Three Marks of All Conditioned Things) are *impermanence* (anitya), *nonself* (anatman), and *nirvana*. Any teaching that does not bear these Three Seals cannot be said to be a teaching of the Buddha. (131)
2. Everything is impermanent because causes and conditions change. **Impermanence** teaches us to respect and value every moment and all the precious things around us and inside of us. It is not inevitable change that makes us suffer. What makes us suffer is wanting things to be permanent when they are not. Of course, this is a concept in the world of relative truth! Nothing is ever lost. Nothing is ever gained. (131-133)

3. Since everything has to inter-be with everything else, nothing has a separate existence or a separate self; this is the teaching of **nonself**. We all have the capacity of living with nondiscriminating wisdom, but we have to train ourselves to see in that way, to see that the flower is us, that each person is us, that we are not separate from others. When we see that everyone and everything belongs to the same stream of life, our suffering will vanish. (133-136)

4. The teaching of impermanence and nonself were offered by the Buddha as keys to unlock the door of reality. We have to train ourselves to look in a way that we know that when we touch one thing, we touch everything. We have to see that the one is in the all and the all is in the one. We touch not only the phenomenal aspects of reality but the ground of being. Meditations on impermanence and nonself are avenues of practice, rafts to help you to cross over to the other shore. (136)

5. **Nirvana** is the extinction of all notions or ideas – the ideas of birth and death, existence and nonexistence, coming and going, self and other, one and many. All these ideas cause us to suffer (e.g., We are afraid of death because ....). Nirvana teaches us that we already are what we want to become, that what we seek does not lie outside ourselves.

6. Other criteria that can help us determine whether a teaching represents a correct understanding of the Dharma (of the language the Buddha used when he taught) include the Two Relevances, the Four Standards of Truth, and the Four Reliances.

7. The **Two Relevances** are Relevance to the Essence (a teaching must be in accord with the Buddha’s teachings on impermanence, nonself, and nirvana) and Relevance to the Circumstances (the teaching must fit the situation and the mentality of those that are being addressed so that the teaching is appropriate). When you are in a Dharma discussion, each word you say should be Relevant to the Essence and to the Circumstance.

8. The **Four Standards of Truth** are “the worldly” (the teaching is offered in a manner appropriate to the cultural setting of the audience: language, accepted teaching styles, etc.), “the person” (the words used in a teaching should vary according to the needs and aspirations of the listeners), “healing” (the teaching should always be directed to curing the particular illness of those being addressed), and “the absolute” (the teaching should express absolute truth directly and unequivocally).

9. The **Four Reliances** are that (1) we should rely on the teaching and not the person (a teaching can come from unexpected sources and many teachers do not practice what they teach), (2) we should rely only on discourses where the Buddha taught in terms of absolute truth and not on those whose means are relative truth (ultimately, yet along the way sutras that teach absolute truth can be better understood in the light of sutras that teach relative truth), (3) we should rely on the meaning and not on the words (perhaps an inaccurate transmission), and (4) we should rely on the insight of looking deeply rather than on differentiation and discrimination. TNH has some problems with each of these reliances.

**Chapter Nineteen. The Three Doors of Liberation**

1. The Three Dharma Seals are the keys we can use to enter the Three Doors of Liberation (Concentrations) – emptiness (shunyata), signlessness, and aimlessness. We have to practice meditations on all three of these “doors.”
2. The First Door of Liberation, Emptiness, does not mean that things do not exist, but rather that they exist in a different way than we think. Things can only inter-be with everything else in the cosmos; everything interpenetrates with everything else. The beautiful flower does not become empty when it fades and dies. It is already empty, in its essence. Looking deeply, we see that the flower is made of non-flower elements – light, space, clouds, earth, and consciousness. It is empty of a separate, independent self. The practice of emptiness is to nourish this insight all day long. When we eat, we need to practice the Door of Liberation called emptiness. “I am this food. This food is me.”

The Concentration on Emptiness

3. The Second Door of Liberation, signlessness, is to see the signlessness of signs (round, square, house, dog). Signs are relative instruments for our use, but they are not absolute truth, and they can mislead us. Until we can break through the signs, we cannot touch reality. To see the wondrous nature of water, for example, you have to look beyond the sign (appearance) of the water, and see that it is made of non-water elements. When we practice the Concentration on Signlessness, we live in harmony with all elements in the cosmos.

4. The Third Door of Liberation, aimlessness, is the realization that there is nothing to do, nothing to realize, no program, no agenda. Your purpose is to be yourself. You don’t have to be “successful.” You are wonderful just as you are. This teaching of the Buddha allows us to enjoy everything in the present moment. Just being in the moment in this place is the deepest practice of meditation. To have happiness in this moment is the spirit of aimlessness. The most important practice is aimlessness, not running after things, not grasping.

Chapter Twenty. The Three Bodies of the Buddha

1. The Buddha is often represented as having “three bodies” called Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. These bodies are also deep within each of us, too; it is only a matter of discovery through meditation.

2. The Dharmakaya is the Buddha’s teaching body, which is expressed today in the body of his teachings, the body of the Way. It is the source of enlightenment and happiness. Anything that can help us wake up is part of the Dharmakaya – trees, birds, human beings, etc. When I hear a bird sing, if I return deeply to myself and breathe and smile, that bird reveals the Buddha’s Dharma body. People who are awake can hear the Dharma being preached in a pebble, a flower, or the cry of a baby. Anything can be the voice of the Dharma if you are awake. Through practice we have to learn how to touch our own Dharma body.

3. The Sambogakaya is the Buddha’s enjoyment body, which is the boundless peace, joy, and happiness we can experience through our practice. Drinking our tea in mindfulness, we can feel happy just being alive. Sambogakaya is the fruit of our practice. Like the Dharmakaya, the Sambogakaya body of the Buddha is available, if we know how to touch it.

4. The Nirmanakaya is the real physical body of the Buddha. In Mahayana Buddhism, the Nirmanakaya is viewed as one of the many transformation bodies sent forth by the Dharmakaya. In this view, the trees, birds, and even Shakyamuni himself are transformation bodies, that is, manifestations (“beams of light”) of the Dharmakaya.

5. Each of us also has these three bodies – a Dharma body, an enjoyment body, and a physical body. These bodies are deep within us; it is only a matter of discovery through practice. The Buddha depends on us to live mindfully, to enjoy the practice, and to transform ourselves, so we can share the body of the Dharma with many other living beings.
Chapter Twenty-One. The Three Jewels

1. Taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (the Three Jewels) is a fundamental practice in Buddhism. Here, to take refuge means to look for a place (like your mother’s womb) that is safe, a place you can rely on. In Buddhism, we do not accept as dogma (“in blind faith”) that the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are refuges. Rather, through practice we come to realize that this is so; this realization is the fruit of our practice. In Buddhism, our faith is concrete, not blind, not a leap. It is formed by our own insight and experience.

2. To take refuge in the Buddha means relying on the Buddha in yourself; adding “in yourself” makes it clear that we ourselves are the Buddha. The Buddha taught, “Take refuge in yourselves, not in anything else. In you are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Don’t look for things that are far away. Everything is in your own heart. Be an island unto yourself.”

3. To take refuge in the Dharma is to choose the “doors” into the Dharma that are most appropriate for you. Sitting meditation is one door, and walking meditation is another. However, though Dharma books and tapes, and so on, are valuable, the true Dharma is revealed through your life and your practice. To reach that point takes committed practice.

4. To take refuge in the Sangha is to receive the support and guidance of the community you practice in, such as the MZMC. Here, building a Sangha, supporting a Sangha, being with a Sangha, receiving the support and guidance of a Sangha is the practice. When a Sangha shines its light on our personal views, we see more clearly.

5. As with all things, the Three Jewels inter-are; each jewel contains the other two. When we wholeheartedly practice one of the jewels, we practice (and strengthen) the other two.

6. In Tuesday and Saturday morning chants, and on special occasions, we take refuge at MZMC in the Three Jewels.

Chapter Twenty-Two. The Four Immeasurable Minds

1. The Four Immeasurables (Brahmaviharas) – love, compassion, joy, and equanimity – are an important bridge in Buddhism from a concern with our own suffering to the suffering of all other things in the cosmos.

2. **Loving-kindness** (maitri) is the radiant warmth of happiness, independent of personal likes or dislikes, that we offer to others without expecting anything in return. To develop that capacity, we have to practice looking and listening deeply so that we know what to do and what not to do to make others happy. Through practice, we increase that understanding.

3. **Compassion** (karuna) counteracts discomfort, withdrawal, or contraction in the face of others’ pain so that we are truly present with them. To develop compassion, we need to practice mindful breathing, deep listening, and deep looking.

4. **Joy** (mudita) – unapologetic joy in being and passion for life – eliminates any envy or criticism of other people’s success or happiness. We rejoice when we see others happy, but we rejoice in our own well-being as well.

5. **Equanimity** dismantles our reactive judgments and prejudices about other people so that we understand and appreciate them as they are. Equanimity is the ability to see everyone as equal, not discriminating between ourselves and others. At the very least, we work to not blindly react to stimuli that bring us pleasure or displeasure.

B. Review Questions
Chapter Seventeen. The Two Truths

- According to Buddhism, there are two kinds of truths, relative and absolute. What’s the difference?
- TNH says that, “Many people think that in order to avoid suffering, they have to give up joy, and they call this “transcending joy and suffering.” This is not correct.” What does he mean?
- TNH says that, “Words and ideas are only useful if they are put into practice.” What does he mean?

Chapter Eighteen. The Three Dharma Seals

- What guides do we have to help us understand correctly the teachings of the Buddha?
- In the context of Buddhism, what does “impermanence” mean? What about “nonself”? Why are impermanence, nonself, and nirvana called “Dharma seals”?

Chapter Nineteen. The Three Doors of Liberation

- Why are emptiness, signlessness, and aimlessness doors of liberation? As doors of liberation, how do they differ?
- How do we practice the Door of Liberation called emptiness when we eat?
- Are signlessness and nirvana the same or different?

Chapter Twenty. The Three Bodies of the Buddha

- What are the Three Bodies of the Buddha? What does each body represent?
- What does it mean to say that each of us (you and me) has three bodies?

Chapter Twenty-One. The Three Jewels

- What are the Three Jewels of Buddhism? In what sense is each a refuge?
- What does “having faith” mean in Buddhism?

Chapter Twenty-Two. The Four Immeasurable Minds

- The Four Immeasurables are the abodes of true love. Why are they called “immeasurable”?
- Each Immeasurable projects an emotion outward. What personal emotions are they counteracting?

C. Meditations

There are many meditations related to the content of our reading this week. This section contains meditations on impermanence, loving-kindness, and compassion. Work with one or more of these meditations this week.

Meditation 1. Everything Changes
The purpose of this meditation is to know that everything we experience is impermanent, that nothing stays the same. After establishing a base of mindfulness, consider these three different kinds of change:

- **Change in the World:** galaxies, planets, mountains, rivers, trees, forests, animals, human societies and nations, clothes and fashions, weather (and whatever else comes to mind).
- **Change in the Body:** external changes in your hair, skin, and fingernails; internal changes in your muscles, heart, and other organs; your abilities to see, hear, smell, and think or remember; in your height, weight, and shape as you have grown.
- **Change in Personality and Belief Systems:** dominant personality traits, likes and dislikes, how we see and experience the world, and how we think and how we interpret the world.

As you practice this meditation, the sense that everything around you is constantly changing sinks in deeper and deeper. Sit with the question, “Is there anything that doesn’t change?”

**Meditation 2. Loving-Kindness**

The steps in this meditation are:

- Assume a position that is both relaxed and also comfortable.
- Bring your focus onto your breathing, sensing each in-breath and each out-breath.
- Bring your focus to rest in your heart at the center of your chest.
- Silently offer to yourself the intentions of loving kindness, while sensing the meaning of each of these phrases.
  - May I be peaceful. May I be happy. May I be safe and protected.
- Allow each phrase to rest gently in your heart and mind, offering to yourself your heartfelt wishes for your own well-being and happiness.
- Sense the potential for pain and well-being that exist within your body. Bring your attention onto your body and continue to rest your attention in the following phrases.
  - May I be peaceful. May I be happy. May I be safe and protected.
- Become aware of the life of your mind and the range of emotions it can experience. Sense the confusion, stillness, spaciousness, contractedness, serenity, and calm that the mind can bring. As you do so, gently repeat the following phrases.
  - May I be peaceful. May I be happy. May I be safe and protected.
- Become aware of the life of your heart and all the joy and sorrow that you can experience. With loving kindness, embrace anger, fear, love, trust, and happiness with calm, wisdom, and serenity.
- Continue to focus your attention within the phrases.
- You may find that long-submerged feelings of anger, pain, or confusion come to the surface. Understand that they too can be received with loving kindness.
- Extend the circle of your loving kindness to a benefactor, a good friend, a person you feel indifferent toward, one by one. To each, offer your heartfelt wishes for their well-being.
  - May you be peaceful. May you be happy. May you be safe and protected.
- When you feel ready, you may open your eyes and come out of the posture.

**Meditation 3. Compassion in the Face of Sorrow**
Compassion asks us to find the willingness to listen to the anguish of the world around us. Wisdom teaches that we endanger ourselves by turning away from pain and its causes. The steps in this meditation are:

- Assume a relaxed and comfortable posture.
- Gently close your eyes. Bring your attention to the stillness and life within your body.
- Now move your attention to the center of your chest and allow it to settle in your heart. For a few moments, bring your focus onto your breathing, sensing each in-breath and out-breath.
- Allow your mind to settle into a relaxed and calm state.
- Invite into your heart your awareness of another’s suffering. It may be someone close to you or a situation of deep anguish elsewhere that has touched your heart. Allow yourself to feel the struggle and sorrow of this situation and those who are caught up in it. For a moment, reflect on the nature of their pain and what they are experiencing.
- Offer your empathy and sensitivity to those in that situation. Extend your heartfelt wishes for their healing. *May you find peace. May you find healing.*
- Let these phrases become the focus of your attention for a few moments; allow them to rest in your heart and attention. You may find yourself lost in sorrow, pity, or anxiety. When this occurs, bring yourself back to your breathing, allowing yourself a moment to center yourself.
- Choose words and phrases that are appropriate to the situation and people you are thinking about. As you repeat each phrase, stay with it for as long as you feel is appropriate.
- It may be that you are the one most in need of compassion. In the face of struggle and sorrow, we too need to learn to extend that same empathy, generosity, and compassion to ourselves.
- Offer to yourself the same heartfelt wished for your own healing: *May I find peace. May I find healing.*
- Before ending, extend these same intentions to all living thing: *May all beings find peace and healing.*

Typically, these meditations are practiced for extended periods of time, usually three or four weeks at a time. The idea is to contemplate what arises during meditation for an extended period of time, for, in Buddhism, the experiences that arise in practice are to be treated as the chief raw material for investigation (rather than the words, for example, in a Dharma book).

### D. Terms and Expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bodhisattva (17)</th>
<th>Dharmakaya (20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avalokiteshvara (17)</td>
<td>Sambogakaya (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Five Remembrances (17)</td>
<td>Nirmanakaya (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Formations” (samskara) (17)</td>
<td>The Four Brahmaviharas (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirvana (17)</td>
<td>Maitri (loving-kindness) (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impermanence (anitya) (18)</td>
<td>Compassion (karuna) (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsel (anatman) (18)</td>
<td>Mudita (joy) (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes
Thought Piece for Our Last Class

Think about the following thought piece during the week. Everyone will have the opportunity at the beginning of the class to tell us what their priorities are and how they plan to work at them.

Be really clear about your priorities. What are the key areas where you want to add value and focus in your practice? If you’re not clear, then it’s difficult to make choices.

In the areas where you want to focus, try to identify people (e.g., Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, Dōgen Zenji) who have developed this behavior or understanding to a high degree. Who is the absolute best exemplar of this behavior or understanding that you can find anywhere in the world, living or an “ancient.” Then say, if somebody can do this at this level of performance, why not me, and why not now? You can always deepen your practice, but if you don’t have a clear goal, it’s hard to know what a deep practice and understanding looks like and is.

(adapted from a 2009 talk by Hubert Joly, CEO of Cralson Companies)

This reading guide is for your convenience. It is not required reading. Some of you may find it useful in reviewing the content of Thich Nhat Hanh’s *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*.

A. Key Teachings

**Chapter Twenty-Three. The Five Aggregates**

1. According to Buddhism, a human being is composed of Five Aggregates (*skandhas*): form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. The Five Aggregates contain everything – both inside and outside us, in nature and society. Since the aggregates contain everything without remainder, there can be no external soul. Enlightenment consists in realizing that the individual is in reality a process whereby the skandhas interact without any underlying soul or self. This is why Buddhism teaches a doctrine of “no self” (*anātman*). (176)

2. **Form** means our body, including our five senses, organs, and our nervous system. Mindfulness of the body practices include (a) scanning your body with the light of mindfulness, (b) identifying the form elements of your body: earth, water, air, and heat, and (c) seeing your body’s nature of impermanence and interbeing, a body empty of any substance that might be called “self.” (176-177)
3. The Second Aggregate is **feelings**, the psycho-physiological faculty of experiencing sensations. Mindfulness of feelings practices include (a) being aware of each feeling as it flows by (one feeling lasts for a while, and then another comes – there is a river of feelings within us), (b) looking deeply into the roots of our feelings in our body, our perceptions, or our deep consciousness (understanding the roots of a feeling is the beginning of its transformation), and (c) learning to not identify ourselves with our feelings by realizing that we are more than our feelings (thus we do not seek refuge in them or consider them as self). This practice helps us cultivate non-fear, and it frees us from the habit of clinging, even clinging to suffering. (177-178)

4. The Third Aggregate is **perceptions**, which involves noticing, naming, and conceptualizing. When we perceive, we often distort, because our perceptions are often erroneous. The result may be many painful feelings. Mindfulness of perceptions practices include (a) looking deeply into the nature of our perceptions by asking, “Am I sure?” (The perceiver and the perceived are inseparable. When the perceiver perceives wrongly, the things perceived are also incorrect.) and (b) looking deeply to discover if afflictions like ignorance, craving, hatred, jealousy, fear, or other habit energies are conditioning our perceptions. According to Buddhism, all suffering is born from wrong perceptions. We have to be alert always and never seek refuge in our perceptions. (178-180)

5. The Fourth Aggregate is **mental formations**, which refers in particular to volitions and intentions (which may be morally good, bad, or neutral) and the way they contribute to the formation of individual patterns of behavior or traits of character. These volitions and intentions are present in our store consciousness in the form of seeds (*bijas*). Every time a seed is touched (watered), it manifests on the upper level of our consciousness (mind consciousness) as a mental formation. Our practice is to be aware of the manifestation and the presence of mental formations and to look deeply into them in order to see their true nature. Since we know that all mental formations are impermanent and without real substance, we do not identify ourselves with them or seek refuge in them. (180)

6. The Fifth Aggregate is **consciousness** or awareness, in both its active, discriminative form of knowing, and its subliminal or unconscious bodily and psychic functions. It is important to realize that ‘consciousness’ means more than the stream of mental awareness, which the English word ‘consciousness’ primarily denotes. TNH is particularly obtuse here. (180-181)

7. A way of understanding the five skandhas is to see them as a process leading to some action on your part. Here’s an example. (1) You experience the sound of a co-worker’s voice (form or sensory stimulus), (2) It is accompanied by an unpleasant feeling (sensation or feeling tone), (3) The sound, tone, and words are interpreted as insulting and offensive (perception or interpretation), (4) Anger arises as an emotional reaction (mental formation or reactive emotion), and (5) The anger is expressed or repressed: you deliver a stinging retort or swallow the anger and say nothing (consciousness or expression in action). Your practice in meditation is to see the arising of your reaction and to learn to let it go. (The example is from Ken McLeod’s *Wake Up to Your Life*)
8. TNH concludes the chapter by stressing that the Five Aggregates inter-are, that each aggregate contains all the other aggregates, and that the aggregates themselves are not the root of our suffering. Rather, the root of our suffering is our lack of understanding of the impermanent, nonself, and interdependent nature of the aggregates. Our practice is to observe the impermanent, nonself, and interdependent nature of all that is. This practice includes recognizing the roots of the aggregates in our society, in nature, and in the people with whom we live. Meditate on the assembly of the Five Aggregates in yourself until you are able to see the oneness of your own self and the universe.

Chapter Twenty-Four. The Five Powers

1. According to TNH, the energy we produce through being mindful can awaken (or reawaken) us to our Buddha-nature. Five power plants (think factory here) can help us generate this energy in ourselves. The Five Powers are that energy in action. The five power plants and Powers are faith, energy (diligence or effort), mindfulness, concentration, and insight. As power plants (factories), they produce electricity (energy). When practiced as powers (i.e., when put into action), they have the capacity to bring about all the elements of the Eightfold Path. Each of the powers eradicates its opposite negative tendency. (184-185)
2. The first of the five is faith, which is the confidence we receive when we put into practice a teaching that helps us overcome difficulties and obtain some transformation. Faith overcomes false beliefs. (185)
3. The second power is energy, diligence, or effort directed toward spiritual goals. Energy overcomes laziness. (185)
4. The third power is mindfulness, which overcomes forgetfulness. Meditation is a power plant for mindfulness. (185)
5. The fourth power is concentration, which overcomes distractedness. To look deeply and see clearly, we need concentration. (186)
6. The fifth power is insight or wisdom, which overcomes ignorance. It is the ability to look deeply and see clearly. (186)
7. When our power plants (energy generators) function well, we are able to produce the energy we need for our practice and for our happiness. The seeds of all of these energies are in our store consciousness and need to be watered. (186-191)

Chapter Twenty-Five. The Six Paramitas

1. The Six Paramitas or Perfections (or virtuous qualities) are a daily practice in Mahayana Buddhism in the course of one’s spiritual development. Practicing the Six Paramitas helps us reach the other shore – the shore of freedom …. (192-193)
2. The first practice is generosity or giving (dana). To give is to offer loving-kindness, our true presence, our stability, freedom, understanding, and so on. When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within
himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. (193-196)

3. The second practice is **mindfulness trainings** (the five mindfulness trainings were discussed earlier in the course). The practice of the Five Mindfulness Trainings is a form of love, and a form of giving. It assures the good health and protection of our family and society. (196-197)

4. The third practice is **inclusiveness** or the capacity to receive, embrace, and transform (sometimes translated as patient acceptance or tolerance). It is aimed at overcoming anger. You can nourish and develop the virtues of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity by contemplating the nature of earth, water, fire, and air. “Lord, I have tried to practice like the earth The earth is wide and open and has the capacity to receive, embrace, and transform.” And so on. These are powerful meditations. (198-206)

5. The fourth practice is **diligence** or effort directed toward spiritual goals. The practice is to continuously water positive seeds in our store consciousness and to refrain from watering negative ones. There are various meditations that help you do this. (206-209)

6. The fifth practice is the **perfection of meditation**, which has two aspects: (a) stopping (shamatha) and looking deeply (vipashyana). We discussed these two different forms of meditation earlier in the course. (209-210)

7. The sixth practice is the **perfection of understanding** (prajna), which in its highest form is free of all knowledge, concepts, ideas, and views. Prajna is the substance of Buddhahood in us. There is a large literature on prajna paramitas, and the Heart Sutra is one of the shortest in that collection. (210-212)

**Chapter Twenty-Six. The Seven Factors of Awakening**

1. The Seven Factors of Awakening are mindfulness, investigation of phenomena, diligence, joy, ease, concentration, and letting go, the potentialities for which are already in us, but we don’t know it. The Seven Factors of Awakening offer a description of both the characteristics of awakening as well as a path to awakening. According to TNH, enlightenment is growing all the time; it is not something that happens once and is then complete – there is a path (and this is what “on the Path” means). The Seven Factors of Awakening, if practiced diligently, lead to true understanding and emancipation (awakening) (214-215, 220)

2. The first and main factor of Awakening is **mindfulness** or not forgetting where we are, what we are doing, and who we are with. With training, every time we breathe in and out, mindfulness will be there, so that our breathing becomes a cause and condition for the arising of mindfulness. (215-216)

3. **Investigation of phenomena** means to open and allow things simply to reveal themselves. With mindfulness, investigation takes us deeply into life and into reality. (216)
4. The third factor is **diligence**, energy, or effort directed toward spiritual goals. In Buddhism, the sources of our energy are mindfulness, investigation, and faith in the practice. (216-217)

5. The fourth factor is **ease** or the practice of letting go. We need to practice resting even when we are not sick. (217)

6. The fifth factor is **joy**, which can be thought of as pleasure in thinking about or anticipating a particular situation (such as being served a glass of water when you are thirsty; when you actually drink the water, that is happiness). (218)

7. The sixth factor is one-pointed **concentration**, which is the result of meditative focus on a single wholesome object. You use your concentration to shine light upon your own suffering, for example, which allows you to go deeply into life and develop understanding, compassion, and liberation. (218)

8. The final factor is **equanimity**, which is the emotionally detached state of one who witnesses without becoming emotionally involved. To be a disciple of the Buddha, your heart must bear no hatred, you must utter no unkind words, you must remain compassionate, with no hostility or ill-will.

**Chapter Twenty-Seven. The Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising**

1. The Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising (the teaching of cause and effect) is the foundation of all of Buddhist study and teaching. All teachings of Buddhism are based on this teaching. (221, 226)

2. According to this teaching, everything is a result of multiple causes and conditions, that is, “This is because that is. This is not, because that is not. This comes to be, because that comes to be. This ceases to be, because that ceases to be.” (221)

3. The twelve links in the chain are: ignorance; volitional action; consciousness; name and form; the six sense organs and their objects; contact between sense organ, sense object, and sense consciousness; feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral, or mixed); craving or desire; grasping or attachment; coming to be; birth; and old age or decay. (227-229)

4. Ignorance conditions volitional actions. Volitional actions condition consciousness. Consciousness conditions mind/body. And so on. As soon as ignorance is present, all the other inks – volitional actions, consciousness, mind/body, and so on – are already there. Each link contains all the other links. Because there is ignorance, there are volitional actions. And so on. (229)

5. In the Five Aggregates, there is nothing that we can call a self. Ignorance is the inability to see this truth. (229)

6. When artists illustrate the twelve Links of Interdependent Co-Arising, they often draw a blind woman to represent ignorance – and so on. See p. 230.

7. In the tendency to see the teachings of the Buddha as an explanation of how things are rather than as a support and guide to practice, the Twelve Links have been misunderstood in many ways. What are some of these ways? (231-234)
8. Our practice is to identify ignorance when it is present. (236) We study the Twelve Links in order to diminish the element of ignorance in us and to increase the element of clarity. (244)

9. We have to water the seeds of our own lucid consciousness. There is ignorance in us, but there is also wisdom. The seed of awakening is also present in each link. Don’t think there is only ignorance in the twelve links, then. There is also the seed of awakened wisdom. If you throw away the twelve Links, you will not have the means to arrive at peace and joy. Don’t throw away your ignorance, volitional actions, or consciousness. Transform them into understand and other wonderful attributes. (238-249) Thus we will know that nothing is born and nothing can die, that birth, old age, and death are only waves on which bodhisattvas ride. (245)

10. There is co-arising conditioned by deluded mind and co-arising conditioned by true mind. Everything depends on our mind. (248)

**Chapter Twenty-Eight. Touching the Buddha Within**

1. There is nothing to stop you from being in touch with life in the present moment. The question is, Do you have eyes that can see the sunset, feet that can touch the earth? If the Buddha were to transmit his eyes to you, would you know how to use them? (250)

2. Don’t think that happiness will be possible only when conditions around you become perfect. Happiness lies in your own heart. You only need to practice mindful breathing for a few seconds and you’ll be happy right away. (250)

3. The practice is not merely to expect understanding and love. It is to practice understanding and love. Please don’t complain when no one seems to love or understand you. Make the effort to understand and love them better. (251)

4. We begin the practice by seeking meaning for our life. As we develop the art of mindful living, we practice the First Noble Truth, identifying our suffering; the Second Noble Truth, seeing its sources; and the Third and Fourth Noble Truths, finding ways to transform our suffering and realize peace. (251-252)

5. We continue the practice, looking deeply into the Five Aggregates that comprise the self, and we tough the reality of no-birth and no-death that is in us and in everything. (252)

6. The heart of the Buddha is in each of us. When we are mindful, the Buddha is there. To enter the heart of the Buddha means to be present for ourselves, our suffering, our joys, and for many others. To enter the heart of the Buddha means to touch the world of no0birth and no-death, the world where water and waves are one. (253)

7. When we begin the practice, we bring our suffering and our habit energies with us, not just those of twenty or thirty years, but the habit energies of all our ancestors. Through the practice of mindful living, we learn new habits. Walking, we know that we are walking. Standing, we know that we are standing. Practicing this way, we slowly undo our old habits and develop the new habit of dwelling deeply and happily in the present moment. (253-254)

8. Please practice.
D. B. Review Questions

Chapter Twenty-Three. The Five Aggregates

- What are the Five Aggregates?
- What is their significance in Buddhist practice?
- How do ‘habit energies’ arise in the Five Aggregates?

Chapter Twenty-Four. The Five Powers

- What are the Five Powers and power plants? What is their purpose in practice?
- How do the power plants generate energy to be mindful?
- How is the energy generated by the power plants put to use in our practice?

Chapter Twenty-Five. The Six Paramitas