



INSIGHT MEDITATION COMMUNITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

IMCC Socially Engaged Practice

Through meditation practice, we develop insight into the interconnected nature of being and of all phenomena. We cultivate qualities of the mind, heart and ethical behavior which together have the capacity to guide us in skillful response to pain and suffering in ourselves and in the world. For some IMCC members, our solitary meditation leads to the expression of spiritual practice not only in daily life but also as commitment to wider social action. The goal of our social engagement is to speak and act from wisdom as well as from kindness, compassion, joy in others' goodness, and equanimity, with the aim of diminishing suffering for all beings, without exception. Our actions, thus, are offerings performed in the spirit of service: attempts to concretely express the truth of universal love and non-separation as articulated in the Buddha's teachings. These actions inevitably provide a mirror that reflects ways in which we achieve or fall short of our aspiration; thus, they are ongoing teachings from which we learn together to deepen in our spiritual practice.

Trainings of the mind in diversity:

From Larry Yang in Thich Nhat Hanh's *Friends on the Path: Living Spiritual Communities*, compiled by Jack Lawlor (Parallax Press, 2002.)

1. Aware of the suffering caused by imposing one's own opinions or cultural beliefs upon another human being, I undertake the training to refrain from forcing others in any way – through authority, threat, financial incentive, or indoctrination – to adopt my own belief system. I commit to respecting every human being's right to be different, while working towards the elimination of suffering of all beings.
2. Aware of the suffering caused by invalidating or denying another person's experience, I undertake the training to refrain from making assumptions, or judging harshly any beliefs and attitudes that are different from my own or not understandable to me. I commit to being open-minded towards other points of view, and I commit to meeting each perceived difference in another person with the willingness to learn more about their world view and individual circumstances.
3. Aware of the suffering caused by the violence of treating someone as inferior or superior to one's own self, I undertake the training to refrain from diminishing or idealizing the worth, integrity, and happiness of any human being. Recognizing that my true nature is not separate from others, I commit to treating each person that comes into my consciousness, with the same lovingkindness, care, and equanimity that I would bestow upon a beloved benefactor or dear friend.
4. Aware of the suffering caused by intentional and unintentional acts of rejection, exclusion, avoidance, or indifference towards people who are culturally, physically, sexually, or economically different from me, I undertake the training to refrain from isolating myself to people of similar backgrounds as myself and from being only with people who make me feel comfortable. I commit to searching out ways to diversify my relationships and to increase my sensitivity towards people of different cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, physical abilities, genders, and economic means.
5. Aware of the suffering caused by the often unseen nature of privilege, and the ability of privilege to benefit a select population over others, I undertake the training to refrain from exploiting any person or group, including economically, sexually, intellectually, or culturally. I commit to examine with wisdom and clear comprehension the ways that I have privilege in order to determine skillful ways of using privilege for the benefit of all beings, and I commit to the practice of generosity in all aspects of my life and towards all human beings, regardless of cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, age, physical or economic differences.
6. Aware of the suffering caused to myself and others by fear and anger during conflict or disagreement, I undertake the training to refrain from reacting defensively, using harmful speech because I feel injured, or using language or cognitive argument to justify my sense of rightness. I commit to communicate and express myself mindfully, speaking truthfully from my heart with patience and compassion. I commit to practice genuine and deep listening to all sides of a dispute, and to remain in contact with my highest intentions of recognizing the humanity within all people.
7. Aware of the suffering caused by the ignorance of misinformation and the lack of information that aggravate fixed views, stereotypes, the stigmatizing of a human being as "other," and the marginalization of cultural groups, I undertake the training to educate myself about other cultural attitudes, world views, ethnic traditions, and life experiences outside of my own. I commit to be curious with humility and openness, to recognize with compassion the experience of suffering in all beings, and to practice sympathetic joy when encountering the many different cultural expressions of happiness and celebration around the world.