

# Guide to a Day of Mindfulness

(Prepared by Sara Becker)

## **Arriving and Settling in**

The key to mindfulness practice is to be really alive, fully aware of our body and mind and surroundings in the present moment. Please don't wait until the official welcome to begin the Day of Mindfulness. You can practice mindfulness even as you sign in and set up your seat by doing everything with awareness, mindful of each step and breath. The practice of mindfulness is not solemn. Moving more slowly and calmly allows us to give more time and attention to ourselves and to life; the practice itself is a great joy. A gentle smile will help us relax.

## **Mindful Speech & Silence**

While the Day of Mindfulness will involve some speaking, silence is one of its most nourishing elements. When you do speak, please speak mindfully—clearly, lovingly, and saying no more than is needed. Please practice mindful speech both during and in between activities—when we arrange our lunch, go to the water fountain or to the toilet, etc.

Our shared silence is not heavy or oppressive. It is more like a gentle blanket of beauty and protection. Enjoy your breathing and be aware of every act and every step. Although we may not be speaking, we can look at each other with the eyes of understanding and compassion. When we meet, we can join our palms in respect.

## **Bell of Mindfulness**

Throughout the day—during mediation, lunch, and so on—the bell will be invited to sound. Upon hearing the bell, stop talking, moving and thinking. Breathe in and out consciously three times, and say silently:

*Listen, listen, (breathing in)*

*This wonderful sound brings me back to my true home. (breathing out)*

Stopping is a wonderful practice. After we have stopped to listen to the bell, we find that we are working or talking in a more attentive and loving way. We are free, fully present, not being carried away by thoughts, feelings or conversation. The bell of mindfulness is the voice of the Buddha, of God, of our own inner spirit, calling us back to ourselves. We can recognize this voice in the chime of a clock, the ring of a telephone, a person walking mindfully, a bird singing, and in many wonders of life. While returning to our breathing, we may like to smile and reply silently, "Yes, I am here!"



## **Sitting Meditation**

The purpose of sitting meditation is to enjoy it. It is not about attaining enlightenment or going anywhere other than where you are. Follow your breathing, rest in your body, and dwell in the present moment. This is the most enjoyable moment to be alive.

There are many kinds of meditation practice. For this Day, our main practice will be mindfulness of breathing. Breathing is a bridge that can help link body and mind. We often get lost in our thinking and worrying about the past or planning for the future. Our mind is in one place, while our body is in another. Following our breathing helps us reunite body and mind.

Whether you sit on a cushion, a blanket, a chair, or directly on the floor, sit in a way that helps you feel comfortable. Try to keep your back straight to allow the air to enter and leave your lungs most easily. If possible, inhale through your nostrils and notice your abdomen expand. Exhale and your abdomen will go back to normal size. Breathe gently and inaudibly. One way to help maintain awareness of breathing is to recite a *gatha* (verse). When you breathe in, say silently, “In,” and when you breathe out, say silently, “Out.”

## **Indoor Walking Meditation**

In order to stretch our legs and to practice mindfulness while moving, we may choose to practice slow walking meditation. We walk together, clockwise, taking one step with each inhalation and one step with each exhalation. Begin walking with your left foot, breathing in and saying silently, “In.” Then as your right foot moves forward and touches the floor, say silently, “Out.” You can also use a *gatha*. Be aware of the feeling of each foot as it touches the floor. Don’t walk *too* slowly. Be aware of others. If the space in front of you becomes more than a step or two, increase the speed of your walking to close the gap.

## **Group Outdoor Walking Meditation**

We walk all the time, but usually it is more like running. When we walk that way, we may bring anxiety, instability and sorrow to the Earth. We have to learn to walk in a way that brings peace and serenity to the Earth. The Earth needs our love and care, and walking meditation is a very enjoyable practice that benefits many.

We walk a little slower than usual, although faster than the style we practice in the meditation hall. The practice leader will set the pace. Please do not walk ahead of the practice leader. As you walk, coordinate your breath with your steps. For example, you may take three steps with each in-breath and three or four steps with each out-breath. So you may say, “In, in, in. Out, out, out.”



## Mindful Lunch

There is great happiness that we sometimes forget. When we take time to sit down and enjoy every morsel of our food, we know that we are very fortunate to be nourished and embraced by the whole universe. Take time to enjoy your meal, chewing each mouthful at least 30 times. The first 20 minutes of our lunch, we will eat in silence. The first time you eat in silence may seem strange or unnatural, but after a while you will see that silent meals can bring a lot of happiness, peace and insight. By eating mindfully and peacefully, we nourish ourselves, our society, and many generations with understanding and love. We can look and smile to friends who are sitting next to us. Thanks to them, or practice is light and joyful.

## Dharma Talk

A Dharma talk is a wonderful opportunity to sit quietly, follow your breathing, and listen mindfully. Please sit beautifully, while staying relaxed and comfortable. Move your legs as much as you need to, but do not lie down unless you must for health reasons.

## Dharma Discussion

Dharma discussion is an opportunity to learn from each other's concrete experiences of the practice, often inspired by (but not limited to) the content of the Dharma talk. Dharma discussion is a time for us to speak and listen mindfully and deeply, to express ourselves and to help one another put the teachings into practice. While listening to others share, we maintain an awareness of our breathing and feelings, without judging or reacting to what is said. We listen to understand ourselves and others better, to hear what is said and what has been left unsaid.

