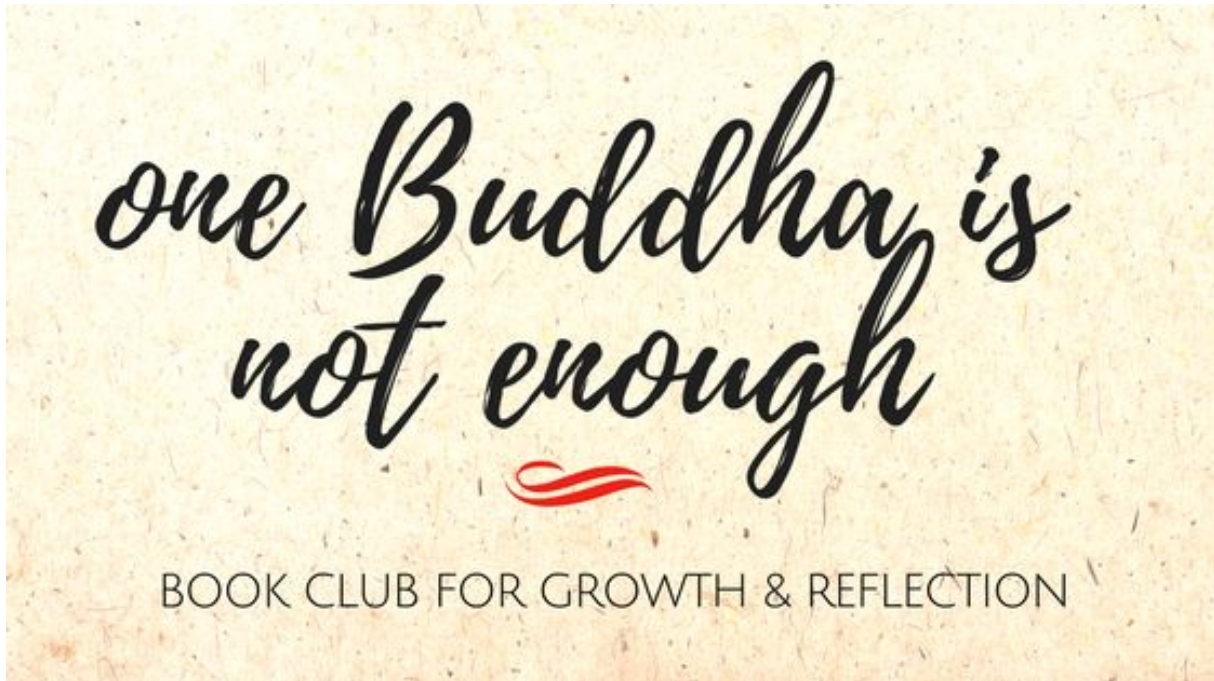


# Chapters 7 through 9

*Contributed by Dharma Teacher, Leslie Rawls*



## INTRODUCTION

How do we learn to believe in ourselves and not just rely on our spiritual teachers? This question was answered in August of 2009 when over a thousand people came to Colorado to spend a week with Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh only to find he was in the hospital and wouldn't be able to lead the retreat. The result of this event is *One Buddha Is Not Enough*, a book on how to become your own teacher and create your own community where you might least expect it.

*One Buddha Is Not Enough*, the second book we will be studying during June and July, offers fresh and original insight from emerging Buddhist teachers on topics such as how to handle grief, strengthen our relationships, deal with anger, and find happiness in the present moment.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR



Leslie Rawls (True Realm of Enlightenment) is a lay Dharma teacher living in North Carolina. She was ordained into the Order of Interbeing in 1995. In January 2009, she received Lamp Transmission as a Dharma teacher from Thich Nhat Hanh. Leslie was an editor of the Mindfulness Bell from 1996 to 2001. She is a member of the Caretaking Councils for the Mindfulness Bell and the North American Dharma Teachers Sangha.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Chapter 7: The Miracle is to Walk on Earth](#)

[Chapter 8: Go as a River](#)

[Chapter 9: I Know You are There and I am Very Happy](#)

[Reflections on Beginning Anew](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

## CHAPTER 7: THE MIRACLE IS TO WALK ON EARTH

**“You may think that with all this meditating, stillness, and quietness, you can’t be very effective in the world, in your job, or in school. But many people have brought mindfulness into their daily lives and have made a huge difference, not only in their own life, but in other people’s lives as well. So to be mindful doesn’t mean you can’t be active or effective in helping other people, in healing suffering, and bringing joy to others.”**

Deep Relaxation Recording by Leslie Rawls (15 min MP3)

[Click here to enjoy a short deep relaxation recording](#)

### Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. As Sister Chau Nghiem drove with her nieces and nephews, she needed their help to navigate. Even the youngest was able to help once she learned her right hand from her left! How do I bring mindfulness into daily life so I can see and appreciate the gifts others offer?
2. A question from the chapter itself: “How can we not just live on the superficial surface of life, but go deep and touch what is important, touch what will really nourish us and help in our relationship with our parents and friends?”
3. Sister Chau Nghiem writes about using the waking up gatha (verse) and about bells of mindfulness. Consider where you feel less mindful during the day, at a particular time, or during a particular activity. Write a gatha to support your practice in that moment each day. After a week or two practicing with your gatha, are you able to be more present at that time?

## CHAPTER 8: GO AS A RIVER

**“There’s a lot of talking going on inside us when we look at things, when we say things, and it creates suffering. So we have to train ourselves to be mindful, to continually nourish the insight of nonself and interbeing in order to be free from the notion of self so we can bring happiness, love, and compassion to ourselves, each other, and the world. “**

### **Additional Reading:**

The Diamond Sutra and the 4 Notions were mentioned in this chapter.

[Click here to read the full sutra](#)

### **Discussion and Reflection Questions:**

Brother Phap Niem tells the story of the rabbit brothers fighting about who was better than the other and more worthy of the carrot.

- 1. Being aware of my own tendencies to see myself as equal to, superior to, or less than another, how can I be more aware of my own gifts without comparing them to another person’s strengths or weaknesses? (In yoga terms, how can I stay on my own mat?)**
- 2. Focusing on one of my gifts or strengths, can I see my ancestor’s presence in it?**
- 3. Focusing on my ancestor’s presence in my gifts or strengths, can I cultivate gratitude for my ancestor each time the strength manifests through me? Perhaps I can write a poem of gratitude or a gatha to bring the ancestor to mind.**

## CHAPTER 9: I KNOW YOU ARE THERE AND I AM VERY HAPPY

"You know, in our daily life we encounter each other with a lot of misperceptions. Sometimes we see it with our own eyes, we hear it with our own ears, but things still aren't like what we think. I trust that everyone has experience with this! So when it happens, we need to do something to restore the communication. The way that we do this is with the practice of Beginning Anew."

Additional Reading: Beginning Anew

[Click here to read Leslie's reflections on Beginning Anew](#)

### Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. Sister Thoai Nghiem tells the story of misunderstandings around a pineapple — a special fruit to one sister, a common fruit to the other — and the difficulty and hurt that arose from their different perspectives. How can I practice to understand another's perspective about a difficulty between us? How can I practice to let go of my own perspective as truth?
2. A question from Brother Phap Ho's section of the chapter: "What helps us to come back to ourselves, what really inspires us to come back and refresh?" How can I nourish and sustain this quality in order to maintain my mindful presence?
3. Brother Phap Ho writes of a couple who practiced Beginning Anew and were "expressing their feelings without blaming the other person." How can I practice to take care of my feelings and develop understanding without blaming the other person?

# REFLECTIONS ON BEGINNING ANEW

## Use Beginning Anew to Build Connection, Love, and Trust

Lay practitioners not living in a monastery or practice community may wonder how to practice Beginning Anew, particularly with friends, family, and coworkers unfamiliar with the practice. I would like to suggest we make Beginning Anew alive and relevant to the circumstances in which we live, being careful to use the steps as guides and suggestions not as a precise recipe that must be followed in a specific order. Some of our relationships may not be amenable to formal Beginning Anew, and still, the substance, the heart of Beginning Anew practice, can nourish and heal those relationships too.

Sometimes we think of Beginning Anew only as a tool for conflict resolution, to be brought out when times are tough. But using Beginning Anew when we are not in conflict can help build connections, love, and trust. Then, when we are in conflict, these foundations will help us —particularly laypeople — engage in Beginning Anew without feeling threatened or unsafe. Remember in Chapter 8 of *One Buddha is Not Enough*, Sister Thoai Nghiem tells the young sisters at Bat Nha Monastery to practice Beginning Anew regularly, at least once a week. Regular practice like this could help mend small conflicts and create loving connections to help practitioners be more open to Beginning Anew in more serious difficulties.

## How to Practice Beginning Anew

### Step 1: Flower Watering

Formal Beginning Anew starts with flower watering. We recognize and appreciate the other person's gifts. Of course, the recipient will be happy to have her flowers watered, and perhaps feel encouraged to cultivate those qualities even more strongly. And flower watering also benefits the giver. When we appreciate another person, our heart opens to that person. Even if we are in difficulty, we realize our relationship is about more than the difficulty, and the other person is more than the words or actions that we think contributed to the difficulty.

Flower watering is also a facet of Beginning Anew we can use anytime, anywhere. We do not have to be in a formal Beginning Anew session to water someone's flowers. Offering appreciation to another in any setting helps connect us in a community. It encourages

the other person to strengthen their gifts. And it can help us cultivate a life of generosity and gratitude. Sometimes, this step of Beginning Anew is all we need to practice, particularly in an informal setting.

### **Step 2: Expressing Regrets for Our Actions**

The next step in Beginning Anew, offering regrets, can be difficult when we are not in a practice community. We may feel vulnerable or at risk when we admit we made a mistake or caused harm. Our culture and society seem more geared toward blaming rather than admitting our own contribution to a problem. Often, the two come hand-in-hand: “I’m sorry I did such and such. But you know that person made it worse by doing this and that.” This shifting blame undermines our truly expressing regrets, which helps us and the other heal. And again, if we practice expressing regrets around small things, then we will be prepared to honestly examine our contribution to larger difficulties, and express regrets then.

### **Step 3: Putting Down the Burden**

In the step Brother Phap Ho calls “putting down the burden,” we are simply present with our suffering, and invite the other to be aware of it. The collective energy of our Sanghas can support us just through being present. In this step of Beginning Anew, we talk about our difficulties and find support through the sharing, we also know the collective energy of the Sangha supports us just by our practice together. Sitting quietly in meditation, we feel the community’s presence holding us. When we suffer, the Sangha energy is healing. And sometimes, sitting in that energy helps us prepare to “put down the burden” so we can see it more clearly and transform our suffering.

### **Step 4: Asking for Support**

Finally, in Beginning Anew, we share our suffering in relation to the other person. When there is difficulty in a relationship, one person does not suffer alone. This step requires us to offer from our hearts, the mantra Thay has given, “Darling, I suffer. Please help.” Our words may differ from the mantra, but using the spirit of the mantra, we will be more open to sharing our difficulty and accepting help. “Darling” may not be a word we speak often. In this practice, it reminds us of the preciousness of the other person,

leading us away from blaming, stepping back from “I suffer, and it’s your fault.” “Darling” changes that. Sharing that we hurt can also mean being open and vulnerable in unfamiliar ways. If we or the other person is not ready for this openness, it can be confusing and perhaps damaging. In lay society, we should consider where and how we can best use this mantra and this step of Beginning Anew to help heal and connect us, to really Begin Anew.

## Reflections on Beginning Anew

Expressing regrets and other Beginning Anew steps require us to be vulnerable and open. To fully practice Beginning Anew requires all participants to be ready to give and accept the practice in a loving way. Can we listen to the other person’s suffering without feeling judged or defensive? Can we share our own suffering without blaming? Not all lay settings offer the opportunity for such openness. Thus, it is important to be prepared for Beginning Anew, and to consider how we might best practice it in the specific setting where we feel the need.

Perhaps we can introduce the whole practice and ask the other person to engage with us in a day or two when he has had time to prepare. Perhaps we can simply apply parts of the practice that are useful to the circumstances — flower watering or beneficial regret, for example — without ever naming the practice to the other. Perhaps we can cultivate ongoing Beginning Anew practice in some relationships, particularly in our Sanghas, so we are ready to share and support each other.

Remember the Lotus Sutra’s teaching on skillful means, upaya. In the sutra, a father sees that his house is on fire. His children are playing happily inside and do not want to leave their toys. They ignore his pleas to run out of the burning building. So, the father employs skillful means of telling each child that a gift awaits outside — a cart pulled by the child’s favorite animal. The children rush out of the house and are saved. Through skillful means, the father saved his children.

In the same way, Thay has used skillful means to refresh the mindfulness trainings, making them more accessible and useful to our practice in the 21st century. As lay people, when we are fully present with the world around us, we may find skillful means to cultivate our Beginning Anew practice — following the steps precisely when that is best and using them as guides when that is best. In this way, the practice of Beginning Anew can help us connect and heal ourselves, our communities, and the world.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation: [www.thichnhatanhfoundation.org](http://www.thichnhatanhfoundation.org)

Parallax Press: [www.parallax.org](http://www.parallax.org)

Mindfulness Bell Magazine: [www.mindfulnessbell.org](http://www.mindfulnessbell.org)

Wake Up International (Young adult sangha): [www.wkup.org](http://www.wkup.org)

Plumline Sangha (Online sangha): <http://plumline.org>

Wake Up Schools (Mindfulness in education): [www.wakeupschools.org](http://www.wakeupschools.org)

### USA Mindfulness Practice Centers

Blue Cliff Monastery: [www.bluecliffmonastery.org](http://www.bluecliffmonastery.org)

Deer Park Monastery: [www.deerparkmonastery.org](http://www.deerparkmonastery.org)

Magnolia Grove Monastery: [www.magnoliagrovesmonastery.org](http://www.magnoliagrovesmonastery.org)

### International Mindfulness Practice Centers

Plum Village Monastery: [www.plumvillage.org](http://www.plumvillage.org)

European Institute of Applied Buddhism: [www.eiab.eu/](http://www.eiab.eu/)

Thai Plum Village Monastery: [www.thaiplumvillage.org](http://www.thaiplumvillage.org)

Asian Institute of Applied Buddhism: <http://pvfhk.org/index.php/en/>

August 2017

[www.thichnhatanhfoundation.org](http://www.thichnhatanhfoundation.org)