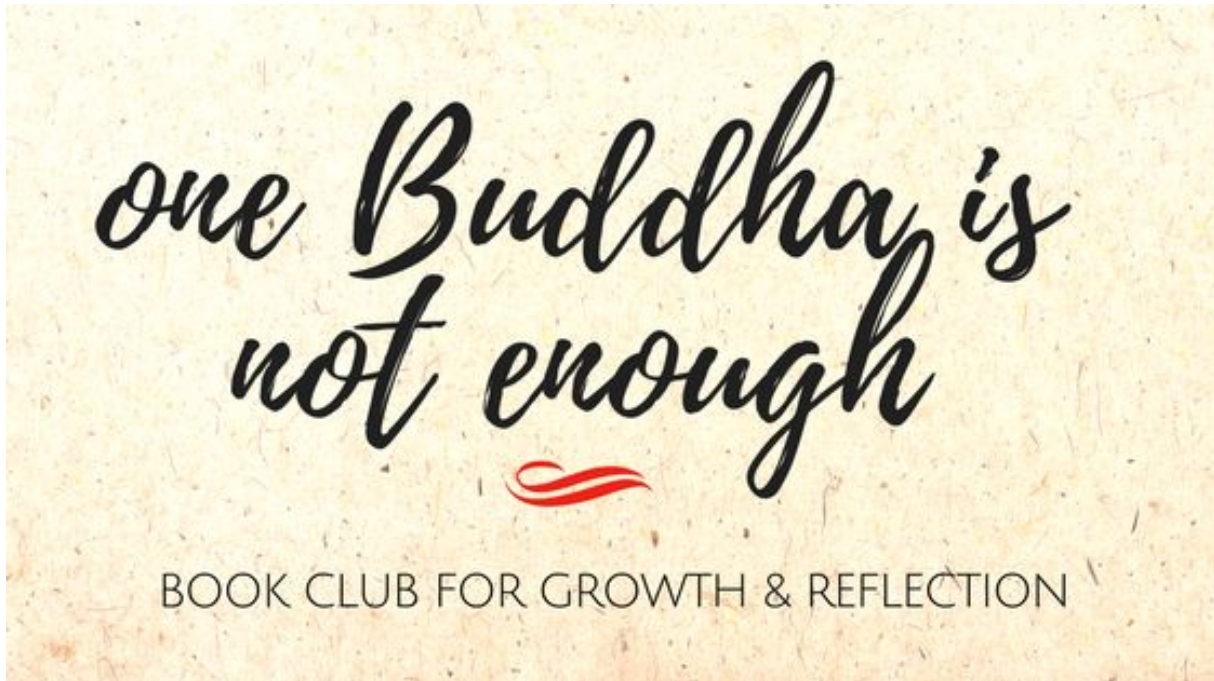


Chapters 10 through 11

Contributed by Order of Interbeing member, Valerie Brown



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



Valerie Brown, True Power of the Sangha, is a member of the Tiep Hien Order (Order of Interbeing) since 2003. She began practicing in the Plum Village tradition in 1995, co-founding Old Path Sangha (PA) in 1998. She transformed her high-pressure twenty-one year career as a lawyer-lobbyist to human-scale work with leaders and organizations to foster understanding and compassion through mindfulness. Her latest book, *The Mindful School Leader: Practices to Transform Your Leadership and School* (Corwin Press, 2015) offers a path of practice for peace and happiness through mindful leadership in schools.

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CHAPTER 10: YOU CONTINUE IN US: A HOSPITAL DIARY

- “...we turned this hospital room into our home. We felt happy and spacious being near Thay each day here....”
- “...in Buddhism, it is necessary to abandon all concepts in order to acquire the right view of reality...”
- “To open my eyes in the morning and see Thay still here for us was a moment of happiness. Having been in the hospital now for a few days, I’ve had the opportunity to observe and contemplate impermanence more concretely. Everything is impermanent, including Thay’s physical form. I’ve treasured every moment that Thay is here with us.”
- “While drinking tea back in his room, Thay shared his insight into the interbeing nature of war and peace. There is peace because there is war. Peace exists inside war. It was due to the war that Thay ended up living in and sharing Buddhism with the West. Thanks to the war, Plum Village and many other practice centers came into existence, bringing much peace and calm to people all over the world.”
- “Happiness is not an individual matter.”
- “...many people shared that they were trying to recognize Thay’s presence in themselves. Most people came for the opportunity to see, listen to, and benefit from Thay’s personal instruction. Still, many first-time retreatants were able to enjoy the retreat without Thay. This was above and beyond anything we had imagined.”
- “To Thay, this was an opportunity for the Sangha to practice without Thay. He had seen the maturity of the monastic Sangha and its ability to be his continuation.”
- “It’s amazing to see how many lives Thay has touched, even while he was hospitalized.”
- “One of the achievements of this retreat is that everyone can see Thay in the Sangha, including those who come to the retreat for the first time.”
- “I have full confidence in the Sangha, and trust that my Sangha will always be able to perform the miracle of the practice, whether with or without my physical

presence.”

Chapter 10 Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. In this chapter, Brother Phap Nguyen describes how Thay’s nine-day hospital stay helped him to more concretely and deeply understand impermanence, and to feel gratitude and happiness. What are the lessons of impermanence in your life? How do you cultivate gratitude and happiness in times of change, transition, disruption, or loss?
2. Sister Thoai Nghiem describes that the retreatants of the Ester Park retreat without Thay’s physical presence, were able to “recognize Thay’s presence in themselves”. In what ways do you “recognize Thay’s presence” in yourself, in your daily life? How do you, in body, speech, and mind, embody Thay’s teachings, his life?

Additional Practice Resource

The Blooming of the Lotus by Thich Nhat Hanh, Exercise Ten, Looking Deeply. This guided meditation recognizes that impermanence is the nature of all things. Rather than, seeing impermanence as something troubling, this meditation invites us to see impermanence as an essential prerequisite for life, to appreciate the preciousness of life, and to live each moment fully, mindfully.

CHAPTER 11: WE HAVE ARRIVED, WE ARE HOME

- “As Buddhist practitioners, we should be able to bring in moments of happiness whenever we want. We should be able to bring in a moment of relief whenever we need it. Can you tell a moment of happiness from a moment that is not happy?”
- “The practice of mindfulness, the practice of concentration and insight can provide us with moments of happiness whenever we want and wherever we are.”
- “So happiness has something to do with unhappiness. The memory of happiness can be useful. Every time we think of that unhappiness, our happiness stands out very clearly. Happiness and unhappiness inter-are. Without the mud, we can’t grow lotus flowers. So whatever unhappiness we have gone through may be useful for us to use as a comparison so we can recognize a moment of happiness. Our happiness is recognized against the background of unhappiness.”
- “When something goes wrong in our body, when there is some pain in our body, we may be caught by that pain and forget that other parts of our body are functioning very well. Mindfulness helps us remember that even if there is some pain in one part of our body, the other parts of our body are still healthy. It’s very important to focus our attention on those other parts. Mindfulness can also recognize and embrace the pain and bring relief.”
- “We cannot buy mindfulness in the marketplace. Mindfulness grows when we have a spiritual home and a spiritual family.”
- “Without the Dharma, a Sangha cannot be called a true Sangha....the true Sangha carries within herself the true Dharma. So Dharma and Sangha inter-are. You cannot take the Dharma out of the Sangha. Because the Dharma is the soul of the Sangha.”
- “There is spoken Dharma. There is written Dharma that we can find in books. But the best kind of Dharma is the living Dharma. It doesn’t need to be spoken or written down. When you practice mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful sitting you bring peace and serenity into yourself, you get understanding and compassion, and you radiate peace while you walk, sit, and speak. Love, understanding, and peace can be seen, and that is the living Dharma.”

- “The best way to build Sangha is to practice the Dharma. We come together as a spiritual family, as a Sangha, the best thing we can offer the Sangha is our own practice.”
- “In Colorado, people had to look for the Buddha in places they did not expect. They found the Buddha in themselves and in the Sangha around them. One lesson we can take away from Colorado is not to look for happiness in one person or one set of conditions. Your happiness is there in the community around you, your happiness is there inside of you. It is available any time. It is available right now.”

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Often it’s easy to feel happy when things are going well and hard to feel happy when things are not going well. However, recall a time when you felt irritated, annoyed, or disturbed, could you also recognize moments of happiness, even at these times? What did you notice? How did you feel?
2. How do you practice the ‘living Dharma’?
3. Take a few moments and recall the conditions for your happiness now. What are they? Write them down on a piece of paper or on your computer. Reflect on the conditions within and around you for happiness, the happiness you feel in others, your family and friends, the community you live in, etc. What is present for you as you recall and write these conditions of happiness. What do you notice?

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE RESOURCES

1. [Click here to listen to a recording of Valerie’s Guided Metta Meditation](#)
2. Written metta meditation (below)

Happiness by Thich Nhat Hanh, “Metta/Love Meditation”

In this practice, Thich Nhat Hanh invites us to recognize the conditions of our life: those that bring happiness and those that bring suffering. Metta or Love Meditation helps us to touch, to connect with ourselves, as we are, and to accept ourselves, as we are. This is an act of love, an act of compassion that supports us and supports the world. In this practice, adapted from the Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification) by Buddhaghosa, we reflect on this passage:

May I be peaceful , happy, and light in body and spirit.

May I be safe and free from injury.

May I be free from anger, afflictions, fear, and anxiety.

May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love.

May be able to recognize and touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself.

May I learn to identify and see the sources of anger, craving, and delusion in myself.

May I know how to nourish the seeds of joy in myself every day.

May I be able to live fresh, solid, and free.

May I be free from attachment and aversion, but not be indifferent.

Begin by sitting comfortably, calming your body and mind with mindful breathing. Say the verses silently to yourself, beginning with directing the verses to you, using ‘I’ statements. Afterwards, you can direct the verses to others: someone you love, someone who is neutral to you, and if it is appropriate for you, to someone you believe is the cause of your suffering. Observe your body, your feelings, your perceptions, your mental formations (ie., your ideas and tendencies), and finally your consciousness.

As you look deeply in this way, mindfully and with concentration, you discover the nature of your body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. This is insight, which brings about transformation and healing in ourselves and in the world.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation: www.thichnhatanhfoundation.org

Parallax Press: www.parallax.org

Mindfulness Bell Magazine: www.mindfulnessbell.org

Wake Up International (Young adult sangha): www.wkup.org

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

Wake Up Schools (Mindfulness in education): www.wakeupschools.org

USA Mindfulness Practice Centers

Blue Cliff Monastery: www.bluecliffmonastery.org

Deer Park Monastery: www.deerparkmonastery.org

Magnolia Grove Monastery: www.magnoliagrovesmonastery.org

International Mindfulness Practice Centers

Plum Village Monastery: www.plumvillage.org

European Institute of Applied Buddhism: www.eiab.eu/

Thai Plum Village Monastery: www.thaiplumvillage.org

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

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www.thichnhatanhfoundation.org