

# *CBBC Meditation Group Orientation*

Updated Nov 9, 2017



Welcome to our Mindfulness Meditation group. We are here to support one another in our meditation practice. This group offers the teachings of the Buddha in the Theravadin (the Way of the Elder) tradition, specifically in the Thai Forest Tradition. But there is no requirement to be Buddhist to attend. Since we meditate in silence, you are welcome to practice whatever tradition of silent meditation/contemplation/prayer you find useful during this time. However, the teachings and discussion which follow will focus on Buddhism.

Who can benefit from Buddhist meditation? Everyone can! Please read Lesson One where I talk about the amazing benefits I experienced after my first meditation weekend.

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Why do we meditate? The Buddha's teaching is about the ending of suffering. It offers a skillful way to deal with the everyday stressors of life. We can apply these teachings to a minor degree in our lives, with great benefit, or we can apply them to greater and greater degrees. For a fuller discussion on this topic, please go to Lesson 6 and look for the addendum under the Noble Eight Fold Path.

Although we are practicing meditation in these group meetings, meditation practice only works when based on generosity and moral behaviour, which are all about opening our hearts and not causing harm to ourselves and others.

## **Meeting Time and Place:**

Our group runs from 7:30 pm until 9 pm every Tuesday at 518 - 2 St. in Canmore, the home of Sanghamitta (Mary Dumka). If Sanghamitta is out of town, one of the senior members of the group will be present to host the group. We often don't meet on the Tuesday between Christmas and New Year's as everyone is busy with family. Otherwise, the group runs year round.

The group is a drop-in. You come when you are able. There are no attendance requirements and there is no need to inform anyone when you plan to attend. Just show up.

For people new to meditation, you can come at 7 pm on any Tuesday to receive some initial instructions on how to meditate. There is no need to phone ahead and make an appointment....just show up. I'm usually in the kitchen. Come and introduce your self to me and let me know you'd like some initial instructions.

There are some written instructions on meditation as well as an introduction to Buddhism available on the Teachings and Resources pages of this website.

When you arrive for the group, please don't knock....just walk in. We meet upstairs. If stairs are a challenge for you, you are welcome to sit downstairs. Sound travels well from upstairs, so you'll be able to hear the teachings. If you have a sitting cushion or bench, please bring it along. Otherwise there are some that are available on a first come, first serve basis, as well as chairs for those who are less flexible.

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## **Meeting Format:**

We start with a couple of chants to help us shift from the busyness of our day, to an inward focus. If you prefer not to chant, that is fine. Just sit quietly. Then we have a silent meditation. Together, this lasts 40 minutes. Then we introduce ourselves with first names. Next is a teaching for about 1/2 hour. Usually this is an audiotape of a monastic or a lay teacher on a meditation topic. This is followed by 10 - 15 minutes of discussion, questions, sharing. This is also the time to ask questions about your meditation practice. These questions do not need to be related to the teaching given that night. The evening ends with a short meditation on one of the Brahmaviharas...the beautiful emotions: metta (loving friendliness/unconditional love), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy...feeling joy when someone else is experiencing happiness) and equanimity (unflappable calm, serenity).

On the last Tuesday of the month there is an optional meditation on the precepts (a moral code). The evening ends formally prior to this so those who wish to leave, can. Then those of us who remain behind, bring to mind the moral code as a reminder of how we choose to live.

## **Bowing:**

Bowing is an optional practice. When you visit a monastery, it is done, if wished, on entering and leaving the meditation hall as well as at other times....just follow the group! In our Sangha we bow at the beginning of the evening, right after the gong is rung.

Bowing involves 3 bows, one to the Buddha, one to the Dhamma and one to the Sangha. The word Buddha means awake. It refers to our mindfulness, which allows us to be awake to each moment we live. So the first bow is to reflect on the importance of mindfulness as well as to feel gratitude to the historical Buddha.

Dhamma refers to the teachings of the Buddha, which are basically on the reality or truth of existence and then using this knowledge to create happiness/peace. So the second bow is to reflect on our gratitude for these teachings and to make the intention to bring these teachings to mind to guide us throughout the day.

The Sangha, in our tradition, refers to the community of monastics (monks and nuns) and enlightened laypeople. Through their dedicated medita-

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tion practice, they come to the same realizations as the Buddha and thus are able to teach us from their direct experience, not just theoretically. The third bow is to reflect on our gratitude for their teachings and support.

## **Personal interviews:**

If you have some questions about your meditation practice that you'd prefer not to bring up in the group discussion, you may request an individual interview with Sanghamitta. Interviews occur from 7 - 7:30 pm on Tuesdays.

## **Donations:**

There is no charge for attending the group. If you wish, there are some donation containers near the door to support the monastics at Birken Forest Monastery and Sati Saraniya Hermitage or to support school children in India and Afghanistan or to contribute to a future nun's Hermitage in Canmore.

## **Library:**

There is a lending library available downstairs for those who have attended at least a couple of meditation evenings and have the intention to continue to attend. There are sign-out booklets. Please fill out a sheet when you borrow a book. Tear out the right hand side and use it as a bookmark and as a reminder to return the book in a timely fashion.....please do not keep a book longer than one month. When you return the book, please tear out the remaining part of the sign-out sheet, place it in the book so it is visible and leave the book on the empty shelf to be filed.

## **Days of Silence:**

Once a week, providing Sanghamitta is available, there will be a Day of Silence for sitting and walking meditation practice in her home. This runs from 9 am until 5 pm. You are welcome to attend the whole day or any part of it. Details are available under Moon Days on the website as they are held on the full, quarter and new moon days. These dates are calculated using the ancient Buddhist method, so they sometimes vary a day from the moon days reported on most calendars. Please sign the subscription form if you'd like to be notified of this practice opportunity.