

CBBC Meditation Group Orientation

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. This meditation tradition is very helpful for dealing with the stressors of everyday life. So you can practice the meditation with this goal in mind or you can more fully embrace the teachings as the full path to the end of suffering. It is totally up to you. And since the meditation part of the evening is done 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.

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.

There are some written instructions on meditation as well as an introduction to Buddhism available elsewhere on 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.

Tuesday night 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 audiotope 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

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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.

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 8 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.

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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 refers to the community of monastics (monks and nuns) in our tradition. Through their dedicated meditation 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 Noble Sangha refers to all who have realized full enlightenment, so this group includes lay people as well as monastics. The third bow is to reflect on our gratitude for their teachings and support.

Bowing, as learned at Sitavana/Birken Forest Monastery (www.birken.ca), is done by sitting on your heels and bringing your hands together in front of your heart (anjali hand position). You then lean forward, placing your hands on the floor in front of your knees and touch your forehead to your hands, reflecting as described above. Please feel free to adjust this position according to the restrictions of your body eg. you may want to sit in a chair and just lean forward slightly with your hands in anjali. Remember that this is a moment for individual reflection on mindfulness, helpful teachings and support. It's not an empty ritual that "has to be done right".