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# Clear Mind

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## Eugene Cash Weekend Retreat, October 23-26

Eugene Cash will lead our next residential retreat. Eugene is returning to Madison after an absence (due to his busy schedule) of several years. Please see the insert in this newsletter for details on registration. This newsletter contains a dhamma essay by Eugene to give you a feeling for his clear teaching style. Get your registration form in early in order to be certain of a spot. If you have questions regarding the retreat you can call Tony at 608-661-9959 or [tony.fernandez1@juno.com](mailto:tony.fernandez1@juno.com)

## Inter-Sangha Service Opportunity Saturday, Oct. 18

Madison Insight Meditation Group has taken on the joint responsibility, with the SnowFlower Buddha Sangha, of cleaning up a stretch of highway near Mt. Vernon two or three times a year. It consists of about two hours of light work with good fellowship and no danger of having to handle anything gross, followed by a sack lunch picnic. This is a wonderful opportunity to practice humility and care of the environment, as well as getting to know our dharma brothers and sisters.

SnowFlower Buddha Sangha is a long-established group of heart-felt practitioners who follow the teachings of the world-renowned monk Thich Nhat Hahn. Many of them will be eager to tell about their experiences at the Thich Nhat Hahn retreat being held in August. It is always a joy to work with and have fellowship with our sister sangha of mindfulness practitioners, and to celebrate our common devotion to the dharma and to our sacred natural environment.

We will meet at 9:30 a.m. at the park in Mt. Vernon. Take Hwy 18/151 past Verona, exit on Cty

Road G going South. Continue to Hwy 92, turn left into Mt. Vernon. Continue one block past the main intersection where you could turn right to continue on G, and take a right at this small street going into the park. Come out, enjoy the fall weather and meet some great new people. For car pooling call Dave Creswell 274-8938.

## Eugene Cash at Sunday Night Sitting Oct. 26

Eugene Cash has agreed to give the dhamma talk at our Sunday night sitting on Sunday, October 26. Sitting will begin at our regular time of 6 p.m. at the Lower Meeting House of the First Unitarian Society, 600 University Bay Drive. For those unable to attend his retreat on that weekend, this is an extraordinary opportunity to receive teaching from a major western Dhamma teacher. Eugene is committed to teaching how this practice is as key to householders as it is in the monastic tradition. You will be sure to hear helpful ideas about integrating family and work responsibilities with our practice. Hope you can join us and have a chance to benefit from these teachings.

## Half Day Meditations Oct. 4 & Dec. 6

We will continue our practice of offering half day meditations every other month on the first Saturday of the month. This fall we'll they will occur on Saturday October 4 and Saturday December 6 in the lower meeting house of the First Unitarian Society, 600 University Bay Drive. The first sitting begins at 9 a.m. If you aren't able to be there in time for the first sitting, you can also arrive on each hour to join in. The last meditation will end at noon and will be followed by a potluck lunch. For more information visit our website at [www.vipassana.net](http://www.vipassana.net) or call Dave Creswell at 274-8938.

## **Meditation Classes for Fall** at Madison Area Technical College, Downtown campus

### *Introduction to Insight Meditation*

Oct. 13-Nov. 17, Monday nights

7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Cost \$35.98

To register, call (608) 246-6220

ask for course No. 60-807-690, class # 27280

Taught by John Meyer (with Jan Sheppard)

### **at Edgewood College**

#### *Introduction to Insight Meditation*

Oct. 15-November 19, Wednesday nights

6:30-8:30 p.m. Cost \$45.00

To register, call (608) 663-3297

Taught by John Meyer (with Jan Sheppard)

### **at Lives Unlimited**

For info or to register for Lives Unlimited classes call (608) 233-7431

#### *Mindfulness for Women*

Oct. 7-Dec. 2, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Cost \$190

Taught by Mare Chapman

#### *Freedom is in the Present Moment*

Nov. 7, 7-9 p.m., Nov. 8, 10-4 p.m., & Nov. 30

9:30-2:30 p.m. Cost \$120

Taught by Mare Chapman

## **Now Twice a Week!**

Madison Insight Meditation Group now offers sittings twice a week: on Sunday night at the First Unitarian Society on University Bay Drive, and on Tuesday night at Dale Heights Presbyterian Church. Dale Heights Presbyterian is located on a busline at 5501 University Avenue. There is free parking in the Church parking lot.

Our regular Sunday night 6-8 p.m. sitting will continue as it has for the last eight years.

The Tuesday night sitting is smaller, more informal and an ideal way for those newer to meditation to have an opportunity to ask questions of the leaders. We meet from 6:30-8:00 p.m. each Tuesday evening. We meditate for 45 minutes and then have a brief dharma teaching and informal conversation that arises from the teaching or from an issue or question raised by someone attending.

The Tuesday sitting will generally be led by Jan Sheppard or John Meyer, with periodic assistance from Tony Fernandez and Lori Creswell.

Since this is still a newer undertaking for our group we will continuously monitor the interest and demand for the Tuesday night group. We hope that this might become a perfect opportunity for beginners to be in a smaller group with more opportunity for asking questions and sharing. If you are interested in this effort, or have other questions about it, please contact Jan at 233-3844 or [jrsheppard@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jrsheppard@sbcglobal.net)

## **Suffering Joy and Service** by Eugene Cash

Buddhism places a good deal of emphasis on suffering—recognizing it, engaging it and liberation from it. The Four Noble Truths state: there is suffering; there is a cause of suffering; there is the cessation of suffering; there is a path to the cessation of suffering.

We are asked to investigate these Truths directly in our own experience, in the experience of others, and in the world. Suffering is the root of the alchemical process that leads to freedom and liberation. By recognizing our suffering, distress, dis-ease, and the instability and ungraspable nature of life, we begin to incline toward a life of Dharma; a life characterized by a devotion to practice and liberation.

Suffering is also emphasized as the doorway to compassion. As we recognize suffering, personally and universally, it begins to melt the sense of separation between our self and others. Suffering ameliorates the (falsely) perceived boundaries we create based on gender, race, class, nationality, culture, intelligence, appearance and other human variables. All humans suffer. All sentient beings suffer. As Longfellow stated so eloquently: "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we would find sorrow and suffering enough to dispel all hostilities"

But suffering is not enough. The Buddha's teaching also places great value on joy and happiness. The Buddha was known as "the happy one." The King of Kosala described that one could recognize the Buddha's followers because they were "...joyful and elated, jubilant and exultant, enjoying the spiritual life, with faculties pleased, free from

anxiety, serene, peaceful and living with a gazelle's mind." (i.e. light hearted)

In Buddhist teachings on the awakened heart, joy (*mudita*) is understood as an appropriate response to the beauty, delight and mystery of life. *Mudita* is most often translated as sympathetic joy. Other translations include altruistic or empathic joy. Thich Nhat Hahn finds these translations somewhat limiting, and offers the following for our consideration:

"Some commentators have said that *mudita* means sympathetic joy or altruistic joy, the happiness we feel when others are happy but that is too limited. It discriminates between self and others. A deeper definition of *mudita* is a joy that is filled with peace and contentment. We rejoice when we see others happy but we rejoice in our own well being as well. How can we feel joy for another person when we do not feel joy for ourselves? Joy is for everyone!"

Joy is available because it is an expression of our Buddha Nature, of our awakened heart. Opening to the difficulties and vicissitudes of life, doesn't necessitate becoming depressed or morose. This was clear during the war in Iraq, when the manifestations of suffering brought on by military conflict were very much in the forefront of experience for many of us. During this time, our Sangha (Insight Meditation Community of San Francisco) produced a benefit for our Sister Sangha in South Africa to raise money for Woza Moya—a project that ministers to the AIDS epidemic in South Africa. The benefit was a great success. Beyond financial success, the joy and happiness that came forth during the benefit was like a wave of blessing during the otherwise dark time of war.

We experienced the joy of community and gladness of heart that comes with selfless service—and an appreciation for the good that is possible for humans to manifest, even in the face of war. It gladdened the hearts of all participants to recognize our interconnectedness and enact the goodness that we experience flowing from our dharma practice. This enactment is powerful in allowing the virtue of our practice to express itself, particularly in the face of suffering. The words of Tagore sum up this enlightened activity:

"I slept and dreamt that life is joy.  
I woke and saw that life is service.  
I served and found that service is joy."

## Self-Reflections by Eugene Cash

When people first encounter Buddhism, they often appreciate the simplicity and clarity of the fundamental teachings on impermanence, suffering, mindfulness and compassion. These teachings make sense. In reflecting on our own life and experience, it is easy to understand these basic truths: that there is suffering in human life; that things change; and that how we engage life is key to our happiness.

The teaching of 'anatta,' commonly translated as selflessness or no-self, is more difficult to understand or relate to. What does selflessness or no-self mean? What does it look like? I seem to have a self. Is Buddhism really suggesting that I don't? In order to understand this teaching, it is helpful to investigate the Buddha's own words. When the Buddha was asked directly whether or not there is a self, he refused to answer. Instead, his teachings emphasize letting go and encourage us to inquire actively into self and not-self.

"...How do you construe this, monks: If a person were to gather or burn or do as he likes with the grass, twigs, branches and leaves here in Jeta's Grove, would the thought occur to you, 'It is us that this person is gathering, burning, or doing with as he likes'?"

"No, sir."

"Why is that? Because those things are not our self and do not pertain to our self. Even so, monks, whatever is not yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit. And what is not yours? Form (body) is not yours... Feeling is not yours... Perception... Mental processes... Consciousness is not yours. Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term happiness and benefit." (*Majjhima Nikaya* 22)

In this teaching, the Buddha points to the question of identification and identity, encouraging us to investigate and explore how our felt sense of "I-me-mine" shows up in our life. What do I identify with? What roles, positions or opinions do I consider me or mine? How does identification happen? Is it mental, emotional, physical, or some combination of all three? What happens when I let go of an idea or belief? Or when I dis-identify with my self-image or personal

history? Is there a time and place when it is important to identify? Are both identification and dis-identification valuable?

The teaching of the Two Truths — that reality includes two dimensions, the Relative or Personal and the Ultimate or Universal — helps illuminate and inform this exploration. When understood through the lens of the Two Truths, we see that the self exists in the relative, personal world, providing an organizing identity that allows for coherence of family, community, culture, etc. At the same time, this relative truth coexists with the ultimate, universal aspect of reality in which no separate, substantial, personal self exists. While this may seem abstract, as we practice mindfulness and discover the freedom of not identifying with thoughts, feelings, sensations, sounds, tastes, smells and sights, we begin to directly experience and realize their impermanent, not-self nature.

Even as we touch this universal dimension, it is important to remember that both truths are equally true. It is true that, ultimately, no distinct, unchanging self exists. But it is also true that we live within the

constraints of the relative; we need to eat when hungry, sleep when tired, and to stop when the light turns red.

Exploring this paradox, of self and not self, personal and universal, is fundamental to the teaching of Buddhism and, through reflection and investigation, provides entry to realization and freedom.

**Clear Mind:** the Newsletter of Madison  
Vipassana, Inc., Madison, Wisconsin

This newsletter is published periodically throughout the year to inform our members of our activities and of events of interest to the Vipassana community. Much of this information is also published on our website at: <http://www.vipassana.net>

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