



Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center

A Center for Mindful Living

681 17th Avenue NE, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413 • Issue No. 38 • Fall 2014

The Breath of Life

by Michael O'Neal

"Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out." —the Buddha

When we are born, our body takes its first breath in. And when we die, our body takes its last breath out. We "expire," which literally means we breathe out.

In between birth and death, our life involves a long river of breathing. As I write this, now, I am breathing in; and as you read this, now, you are breathing out. In this world at this moment uncountable numbers of living beings of all shapes and sizes are breathing in and breathing out. The whole world is breathing.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that we never step in the same river twice, because it is always a new river. And in the same way our river of breathing is always new, always fresh, always alive. Our body is constantly discovering how to breathe.

This body is able to breathe quite well without conscious attention. It regulates what kind of breathing is needed at a given time – strong, deep breaths when exercising; calm, quiet breaths when resting. It would probably be possible to live an entire life without ever being consciously aware of our breathing.

But interestingly enough, we can be aware of our breathing, and we can bring a degree of deliberate control to it. Our conscious mind, not just the autonomic nervous system, can regulate the breathing. But this conscious control has limits. I once knew a little girl who, when having a temper tantrum, would hold her breath until she passed out. In a sense the body would allow a certain amount of (mis) control; then it would shut off the trouble-making consciousness, calm the body, restore the breathing, and allow consciousness to gradually return.

Over the centuries, breath awareness has been perhaps the most basic object of meditation. There are many reasons for this. One is this shared territory of conscious control and autonomic control. When we are mindful of our breathing, we are automatically in touch with both aspects, and we can mindfully explore "control" and what is beyond control. Awareness of breathing also brings us deeply in touch with our bodies, in "real time"—right now. Most of us live some



distance from our bodies, with an occasional hurried visit, often only when we're in pain. But the life of the body is ongoing. We are embodied creatures. Someone once told me of a Catholic nun who said, "We are not physical beings struggling to become spiritual; we are spiritual beings struggling to become physical." When we are estranged from our body, we are ungrounded, unsettled, naturally anxious. Ajahn Chah said, "Do nothing which takes you out of the body." The Buddha was very at-

tuned to awareness of breathing. It has been said that it was the central meditation practice that he used on his journey to awakening; the meditation practice he used after he awakened as the Buddha; and the meditation practice he taught most often.

Mindfulness of breathing in and breathing out – *anapanasati* in Pali – involves attention to the breath proper, but also more than this. We begin by bringing our breathing into awareness: "Breathing in, I know I am breathing in; breathing out, I know I am breathing out." Then we deepen awareness of our breathing to include its character – long, short, deep, shallow, ragged, smooth, etc. And then we become aware of the whole body as the context of our breathing.

As we continue to breathe with awareness, we also note, and cultivate, a sense of calmness in the body. Then we pay attention to our feeling-tones – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. And then we cultivate calmness here as well.

Then we bring awareness – keeping the breath in mind—to our mind states, or mental formations – the shape the mind is taking at this time. Is joy present? Or anger? Longing? Boredom? Sadness? Enthusiasm? We look at the form our mind is taking, note how it has arisen, and how best to take care of it.

And then we look at the deep nature of our experience, and of how the mind can best find freedom within it, all the while maintaining contact with our breathing.

When we practice in this way, we discover the richness of the body's breathing, and the wonderful gateway it provides to stability, openheartedness, and insight. We make good use of this most natural element of living. Then our breathing truly becomes "the breath of life."

Mindfulness in Depth

A Special Year-Long Program of Practice and Study

Mindfulness is our capacity to deeply touch our lives exactly at the point of aliveness. It is a subtle practice, but radically transformative. Everyone has the capacity to be more mindful; however, without intentional cultivation, this great opportunity is likely to slip away.

This program is intended to support the continued exploration of mindfulness by those who have already begun their formal practice of it through an introductory course and are prepared to maintain a regular sitting practice. It is built around the study and practice of two of the Buddha's most important teachings on mindfulness: the *Anapanasati (Mindfulness with Breathing) Sutta*, and the *Satipatthana (Foundations of Mindfulness) Sutta*. Both of these discourses present detailed practices for establishing the foundations of mindfulness, whether sitting, standing, walking, or lying down, including in daily life activities. (See page x for more information on these discourses.) Program instructor **Michael O'Neal** has participated in two three-week practice periods led by Thich Nhat Hanh on the topic of Mindfulness with Breathing.

Fall 2014: Mindfulness with Breathing

In the discourse with this title the Buddha presents 16 ways to use the breath as a gateway to ever-deepening mindfulness. This begins with simple breath awareness ("Breathing in, I know I am breathing in...") and then progresses to further awareness of the body, of feeling-tones, of mind states, and of the deep structures of our perceived reality, all linked with the breath. Thich Nhat Hanh has said, "When I first encountered this teaching, I felt I was the happiest person in the world."

Winter 2015: Mindfulness of Body, Mindfulness of Feelings

In the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the Buddha begins with conscious breathing, then proceeds to thoroughly explore many other ways to practice mindfulness. This course will practice mindfulness of the body when sitting, standing, lying down, and moving. It will also explore feeling-tones—the basic experience of pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant that continuously underlies and shapes our more developed mental/emotional experiences.

Spring 2015: Mindfulness of Mind, Mindfulness of Dharma

Continuing the study of the *Satipatthana Sutta*, this course will explore the many forms the mind takes, such as love, joy, anger, and fear, including how these mental formations arise and how we can skillfully take care of them. We will also examine the deep structures of reality that form the foundation of our world and our lived experience.



Fall Programs 2014

Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center

681 17th Avenue NE, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413
(612) 781-7640 • www.OceanDharma.org

Mindfulness in Depth

Fall, 2014: Mindfulness with Breathing

Taught by Michael O'Neal



“When I first encountered this teaching, I felt I was the happiest person in the world.”

—Thich Nhat Hanh

A thorough exploration of mindfulness with breathing, based on the Buddha's teaching in the *Anapanasati Sutta*. This experiential course, the first of a three-part series, is intended for people who have already begun a mindfulness practice and are interested in deepening their practice and study. Each class will include meditation with instruction, teaching by the instructor, group discussion, and recommended home practice.

Member rates apply to members of all local Dharma centers. Reduced fees are offered as needed; please contact the Center at (612) 781-7640.

To register, see the form in this newsletter, visit our website, or call (612) 781-7640.

Minneapolis (#B71)

Wednesdays, October 1 – November 19 (eight sessions)

7:00-9:00 P.M.

1626 Jefferson St. NE, Minneapolis

\$160 (members \$140) + \$30 materials fee

Total Dynamic Living - Introductory Program in Mindfulness

Total Dynamic Living is a thorough, well-structured introduction to mindfulness practice in everyday life. It follows the nationally acclaimed mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) model developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, presenting mindfulness as a universal practice for people of any (or no) religious background.

The program includes instruction and practice in sitting meditation, gentle yoga, body awareness meditation, and daily-life applications of mindfulness. It also includes information about stress and relaxation. The program enables participants to develop their own base in mindfulness practice integrated into everyday life.

The course includes eight weekly classes, an individual interview with the instructor, a Saturday retreat, the book *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, four CDs, and handouts. 27 CEUs are available for all courses.

The course fee is \$295 plus a \$35 materials fee. Payment plans and some scholarship aid are available. Please contact the Center to discuss.

Enrollment is limited, and pre-registration is required. Please let your friends and colleagues know about this program.

#183 Minneapolis: Tuesdays
Sept. 23 – Nov. 11 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructor: Joen Snyder O'Neal
Location: Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center
#210 Casket Arts Building, 681 17th Ave. NE, Minneapolis
(in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District)

#263 St. Paul: Thursdays
Sept. 25 – Nov. 13 • 6:30-9:00 P.M.

Instructor: Michael O'Neal
Location: Clouds in Water Zen Center
308 Prince St., St. Paul (near I-94 & the 7th St. exit)

Total Dynamic Living: One-Day Retreat

This retreat is open to all current participants in Total Dynamic Living courses. It is also open to graduates of past Total Dynamic Living courses on a donation basis. People not enrolled in a current course should call the Center in advance to reserve a space.

Saturday, November 8 • 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.

Location: 681 17th Ave. NE, Suite 210, Minneapolis

Gift certificates for the Introductory Program in Mindfulness are available. Please email admin@OceanDharma.org or call (612) 781-7640.



Membership:

You are invited to become a member of the Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center. Membership is a way to support the programs of the Center, and is encouraged for those who participate regularly as well as those who simply would like to help make possible the continued life of the Center. A membership brochure is available at sangha gatherings or can be sent out by mail; please call if interested.

Sangha Gatherings

The Compassionate Ocean Sangha is a group practicing in the Buddhist mindfulness traditions of Soto Zen and Thich Nhat Hanh. Throughout the year the sangha (community) has weekly gatherings that include sitting and walking meditation, dharma talks and discussions, mindful movement, chanting and singing, and other spiritual practices. Dharma talks focus on aspects of Buddhist teaching and their application to everyday life.

Everyone is invited to participate in our sangha gatherings. There are no prerequisites to participate, and people are welcome to come when they wish. There is no fee; donations are welcome.

There are two weekly gatherings of the Compassionate Ocean Sangha. The Sunday group is co-led by Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal. Joen leads the Friday group.

Sunday Gathering: Sundays, 9:00-11:15 A.M.

681 17th Avenue N.E., Suite 210, Minneapolis

Schedule: 9:00 sitting, 9:25 walking, 9:35 sitting, 10:00 dharma talk and discussion, 11:15 ending

Note: Gatherings resume on Sunday, September 7 after our August break.

Friday Gathering: Fridays, 9:30-11:00 A.M.

681 17th Avenue N.E., Suite 210, Minneapolis

Schedule: 9:30 sitting, 10:00 dharma talk and discussion, 11:00 ending

Note: Gatherings resume on Friday, September 5 after our August break.

Guiding Teachers



Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal

The guiding teachers are available for individual meetings regarding life and practice. To set up an appointment, call the Center.

Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal are the guiding teachers of the Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center. They practiced and taught for many years at the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center and Hokyoji Zen Monastery under the guidance of Dainin Katagiri Roshi. They have also practiced with Thich Nhat Hanh in France and the United States, and have completed a training for professionals with Jon Kabat-Zinn. Joen was ordained as a Zen priest by Katagiri Roshi in 1980 and received Dharma transmission from him in 1989.

Sangha Retreats

These retreats are open to community members as well as others who have had some experience with Buddhist practice and meditation. Each retreat offers an extended opportunity to settle the mind and body and open to the deep wisdom of human life. These retreats are excellent opportunities to strengthen and deepen the practice of presence, including benefiting from the support of others.

One-day Sitting

Saturday, September 27, 9:00 A.M.-4:30 P.M.

681 17th Avenue N.E., Suite 210, Minneapolis

Led by Joen Snyder O'Neal and Michael O'Neal

This includes sitting and walking meditation, yoga practice, and a dharma talk by Joen Snyder O'Neal or Michael O'Neal. Participants should bring a bag lunch; drinks will be provided. Fee: \$20 members, \$25 nonmembers

Weekend Retreat

Friday, Oct. 24, 7:00 P.M.—Sunday, Oct. 26, 11:30 A.M.

1626 Jefferson St. NE, Minneapolis

Fee: \$60 members, \$75 non-members (includes meals)

Rohatsu: Buddha's Enlightenment Sesshin

Mon., Dec. 1, 9:00 AM – Sat., Dec. 6, 5:00 PM

1626 Jefferson St. NE, Minneapolis

Co-led by Joen Snyder O'Neal, Michael O'Neal and Byakuren Judith Ragir

Co-sponsored by Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center and Clouds in Water Zen Center

Sesshin literally means "to gather the heart/mind." The December Rohatsu sesshin commemorates and reenacts the seven days of meditation culminating in the enlightenment of the Buddha, traditionally celebrated on Dec. 8. Rohatsu sesshin take place at Zen centers throughout the world at this time. This sesshin offers a special opportunity to touch the depth of human life, supporting and being supported by innumerable beings. This sesshin will be held jointly with Clouds in Water Zen Center and is open to community members as well as others who have had experience with Buddhist practice and meditation. If this will be your first retreat with us, please call Compassionate Ocean in advance to discuss.

Participants can register for one to six days. To register on-line go to www.CloudsinWater.org. Early registration is encouraged.

Fee: \$45/day for nonmembers, \$36/day for members of Compassionate Ocean or Clouds in Water.

Fall 2014 Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Zip _____ Email _____

Phone

H: () _____

W: () _____

To register, please check the appropriate activities.

Total Dynamic Living–Introductory Program in Mindfulness (\$25 deposit)

- Minneapolis, Tuesday evenings (#183)
- St. Paul, Thursday evenings (#263)

Total Dynamic Living–One Day Retreat

- Saturday, Nov. 8, 8:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.
(by donation for program alumni)

Buddhist Studies class:

Mindfulness with Breathing

- Minneapolis, Wednesday evenings (#B71)
(\$25 deposit)

One-Day Sangha Retreat

- Saturday, September 27
(enclose payment of \$25, members \$20 each)

Weekend Retreat

- Friday, Oct. 24 – Sunday, October 26
(enclose payment of \$75, members \$60 each)

Buddha's Enlightenment Sesshin

- Monday, Dec. 1 – Saturday, Dec. 6
(Full payment with registration: \$36/day members, \$45/day non- members)

Enrollment for these activities is limited, and early registration is encouraged.

Please call if you have any questions
(612) 781-7640

To register, send this form along with the non-refundable deposit listed (payable to CODC) to:
Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center
681 17th Ave. NE Ste. 210, Minneapolis, MN 55413
or register online at: www.OceanDharma.org

Deep Appreciation...

...to all who supported the Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center in recent months by making a financial contribution. A Dharma Center only exists through the generous support of many beings. The following people, foundations, and organizations made donations, either through membership pledges, year-end contributions, building fund support, designated giving, or general contributions. Heartfelt thanks go to all.

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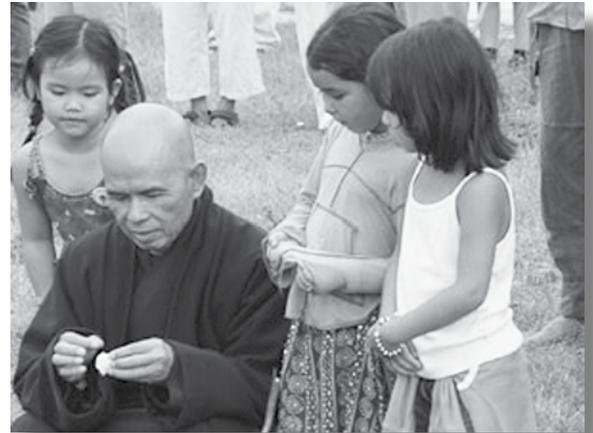
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About Two Important Meditation Texts

This year Compassionate Ocean will offer a special three-course series called “Mindfulness in Depth.” The program will be built around two related teachings of the Buddha: the *Anapanasati Sutta*, to be studied in the fall course, and the *Satipatthana Sutta*, a longer discourse to be studied in the winter and spring. The two discourses are some of the most detailed and specific instructions the Buddha gave on the practice of mindfulness, with a wide variety of methods and approaches.

In his book *Breathe! You Are Alive*, Thich Nhat Hanh talks about these discourses:

In many countries of the Mahayana tradition, the *Anapanasati Sutta (Full Awareness of Breathing)* and the *Satipatthana Sutta (Four Establishments of Mindfulness)* are not considered important and, in some cases, are not even available for study....The Four Establishments of Mindfulness are a daily practice, described in great detail in the *Anapanasati* and *Satipatthana Suttas*. These two texts, along with the *Bhaddekaratta Sutta (Sutra on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone)*, are fundamental to the practice of meditation, and the author of this commentary [Thich Nhat Hanh] feels that it is very important to reestablish the importance of these three texts in all places of study and meditation.



Thich Nhat Hanh with children

In the Southern traditions of Buddhism, the *Full Awareness of Breathing* and *Four Establishments of Mindfulness* are still regarded as the most important texts on meditation. Many monks learn these sutras by heart and give them their greatest attention. Even though the spirit of these sutras is very much present and observable in the Mahayana meditation sutras, we would do well to become familiar with the sutra literature fundamental to meditation that was studied and practiced at the time of the Buddha. The author hopes that these texts will again be put into wide circulation in the Northern traditions of Buddhism.

These two meditation sutras will be the center of our year-long Buddhist Studies program, Mindfulness in Depth. The fall course, Mindfulness with Breathing, will focus on the *Anapanasati (Full Awareness of Breathing) Sutta*. The two texts that will be used are *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* by Thich Nhat Hanh, and *The Path of Emancipation: Talks from a 21-Day Mindfulness Retreat*, also by Thich Nhat Hanh. The former text is a translation of the *Anapanasati Sutta* with commentary. The latter text is a record of talks and dialogues from a 1998 retreat in Vermont led by Thich Nhat Hanh on the topic of full awareness of breathing.

–Michael O’Neal



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Fall Program Highlights

- **Introductory Programs in Mindfulness**
offered in Minneapolis and St. Paul
- **Buddhist Studies course**
– *Mindfulness with Breathing*
- **One-day Retreat**
– Saturday, September 27
- **Weekend Retreat**
– Friday, Oct. 24 - Sunday, Oct. 26
- **Rohatsu: Buddha's Enlightenment Sesshin**
– Monday, Dec. 1 - Saturday, Dec. 6

Ribbon Cutting Campaign a Success

Dear Friend of Compassionate Ocean,

On July 1 we completed our Ribbon Cutting Campaign and Spring Appeal. With the help of 92 donors, we surpassed our fundraising goal. This response demonstrates the depth and breadth of support for Compassionate Ocean and bodes well for the future of the Center. We now have the funds needed to complete the building renovation. We expect to open the doors of our new home this fall. Watch for more news about this landmark event. We also met our goal for the Spring Appeal, which is part of our 2014 operating budget. And, we replenished our cash reserves, which helps us to weather our periodic ups and downs in income and expenses.

More challenges lie ahead to make sure that Compassionate Ocean is financially stable and sustainable for the longer term. But with the generous help of those who contributed to the 2014 Ribbon Cutting Campaign, Compassionate Ocean's financial position has been significantly strengthened. With the completion of the new building, the Center will be able to play a more vital role in the community.

Many thanks to all the donors who contributed to this inspiring result. Your support for the teachers, community, and programs of Compassionate Ocean is heartwarming and deeply appreciated. Also deep thanks to all the volunteers who worked so hard to make this campaign a success.

Alan Williams, Board Chair

