Week 5: The Tibetan/Vajrayana tradition and Thich Nhat Hanh/Plum Village

OLLI, Charlottesville, VA

13 October 2026

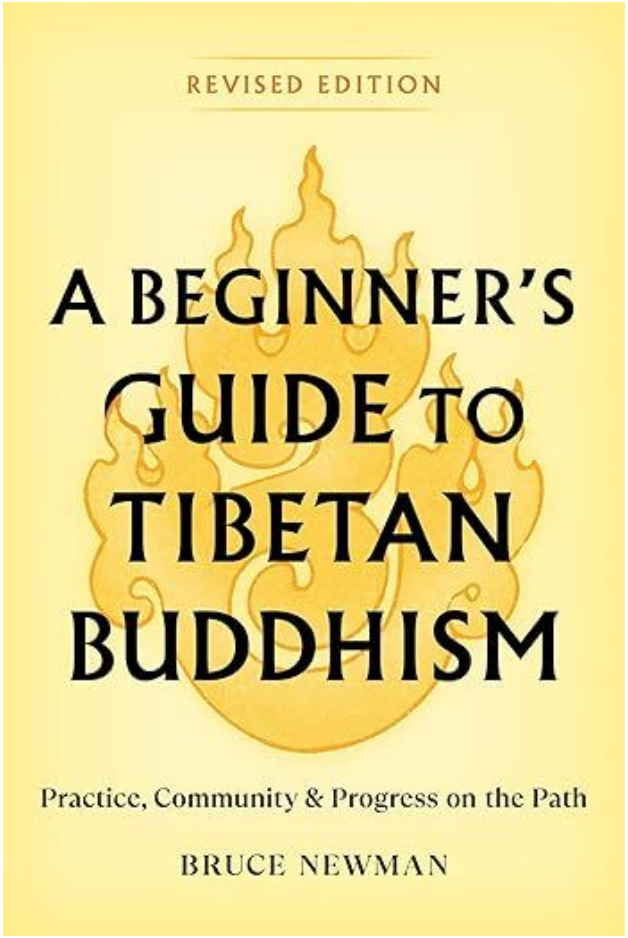
Link to extended readings & slides:https://parusanalytics.com/introbud2026/week-five-2026.html

13 October 2025

19th century development of British attitudes towards Buddhism

- Initially confused it with Hinduism, which they viewed as generic paganism
    - Brahmins were happy with the identification: Buddhism had long disappeared from India and they argued Buddha was just another avatar of Vishnu: nothing to see here, move along, move along
- Once missionaries realized it was distinct, and had a moral code similar to Christianity, saw it as a threat and countered that it was "nihilistic"
- With the post Darwin religious crises, it indeed became a threat as a secular philosophy with a strong moral code but without a focus on a god
    - Also Theravadan Buddhism was interpreted as a "Protestant" response to both Hinduism and Tibetan Vajrayan
- Key popularization: Edward Arnold's *The Light of Asia* (1879), eventually translated into 30 languages
    - Arnold, a journalist with *The Daily Telegraph*, was knighted in 1888 and also received awards from Japan, Siam, Persia and the Ottoman Empire

Useful source: *The Buddha and the Sahibs: The men who discovered India's lost religion*, by Charles Allen, 2015


REVISED EDITION
A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TIBETAN BUDDHISM
Practice, Community & Progress on the Path
BRUCE NEWMAN

[2022]

Historical development

- **3rd century CE: Bon influenced in Kingdom of Zhangzhung (eastern Nepal)**
- **First dissemination (7th–9th centuries)**
- **Era of fragmentation (9th–10th centuries)**
- **Second dissemination (10th–12th centuries)**
- **Mongol dominance (13th–14th centuries: Yuan Dynasty)**
- **Ebb and flow of Chinese (Ming, Qing, Communist) control and Tibetan independence (15th–present)**

Major orthodox schools of Tibetan Buddhism

- **Nyingma** (700s) [Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, but he is also Kagyu]
- **Kagyü** (1000s)
- **Gelugpa** (1409) [Dalai Lama]
- **Sakyapa** (1073)
- **Bon** (Serenity Ridge, Ligmincha International): pre-Buddhist, so only sort of orthodox

A characterization of the four schools

In his work, The Four Dharma Traditions of the Land of Tibet, Mipham Rinpoche described the four main schools as follows:
Nyingma followers of Secret Mantra emphasize the actual tantra.
They pursue the highest view and delight in conduct that is stable.
Many reach the vidyādhara levels and attain accomplishment,
And many are mantrins, whose power is greater than others.
Kagyü followers, the protectors of beings, emphasize devotion.
Many find that receiving the lineage's blessings is sufficient.
And many gain accomplishment through perseverance in the practice
They are similar to, and mix together with, the Nyingmapas.

The Riwo Gendenpas (i.e. Gelugpas) emphasize the ways of the learned.
They are fond of analytical meditation and delight in debate.
And they impress all with their elegant, exemplary conduct.
They are popular, prosperous, and put effort into learning.
The glorious Sakyapas emphasize approach and accomplishment.
Many are blessed through the power of recitation and visualisation,
They value their own ways and their regular practice is excellent.
When compared to any other school, they have something of them all.
Ema! All four dharma traditions of this land of Tibet
Have but one real source, even if they arose individually.
Whichever one you follow, if you practise it properly
It can bring the qualities of learning and accomplishment.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tibetan_Buddhism#Major_lineages

Some modernizing variants

- **Rimè** (19th century) "no school" : nonsectarian involving all schools, including Bon
- **Shambhala**: Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1960s), Naropa University (Boulder), Pema Chödrön
- **New Kadampa Tradition – International Kadampa Buddhist Union** (**NKT—IKBU**) "is a global Buddhist new religious movement founded by Kelsang Gyatso in England in 1991" [Wikipedia…], and is sort of a Gelugpa spinoff but is passionately opposed to the Dalai Lama, nominally over a specific ritual. It's complicated…
- **Mind and Life Institute** (Charlottesville; Dalai Lama): integration with Western scientific approaches

Principal dimensions where Tibetan practice differs from Theravadan and Mahayana

- Practice is intermediated by one's guru, and includes secret teachings
- A complex immaterial cosmology is central to the practice
  - This involves extended rituals, which is different that Theravadan's rejection of "rites and rituals"
- Study tends to focus on the a very large corpus of material from the past 500 years: "third turning of the wheel of dharma"

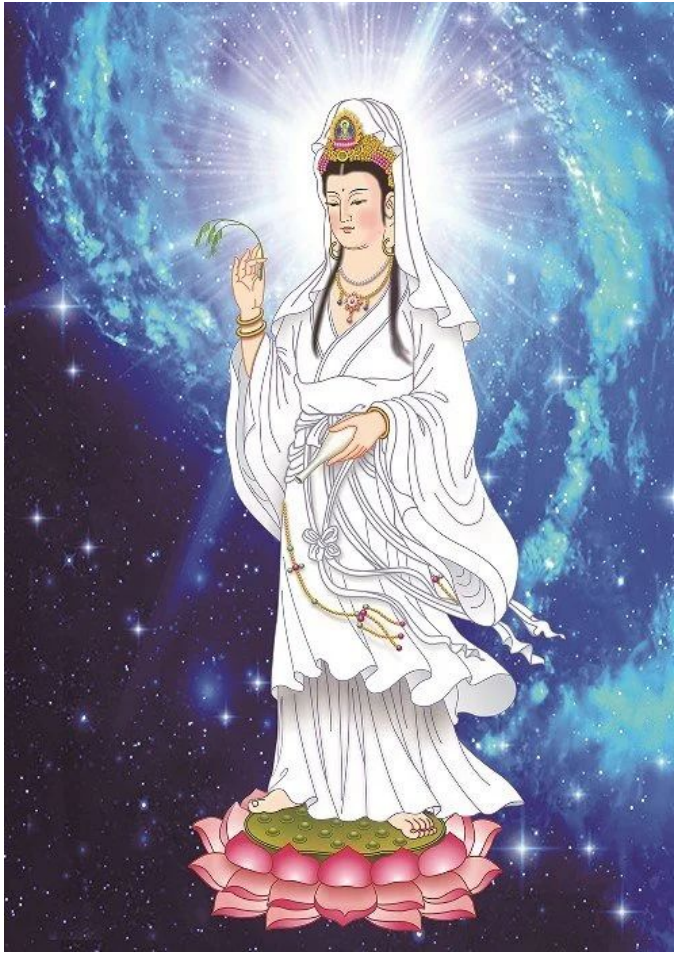
Nonetheless, it completely acknowledges the core Buddhism concepts of dukkha, anata, annica as well as the South Asian assumptions of rebirth and karma, and advanced meditation is a central practice.



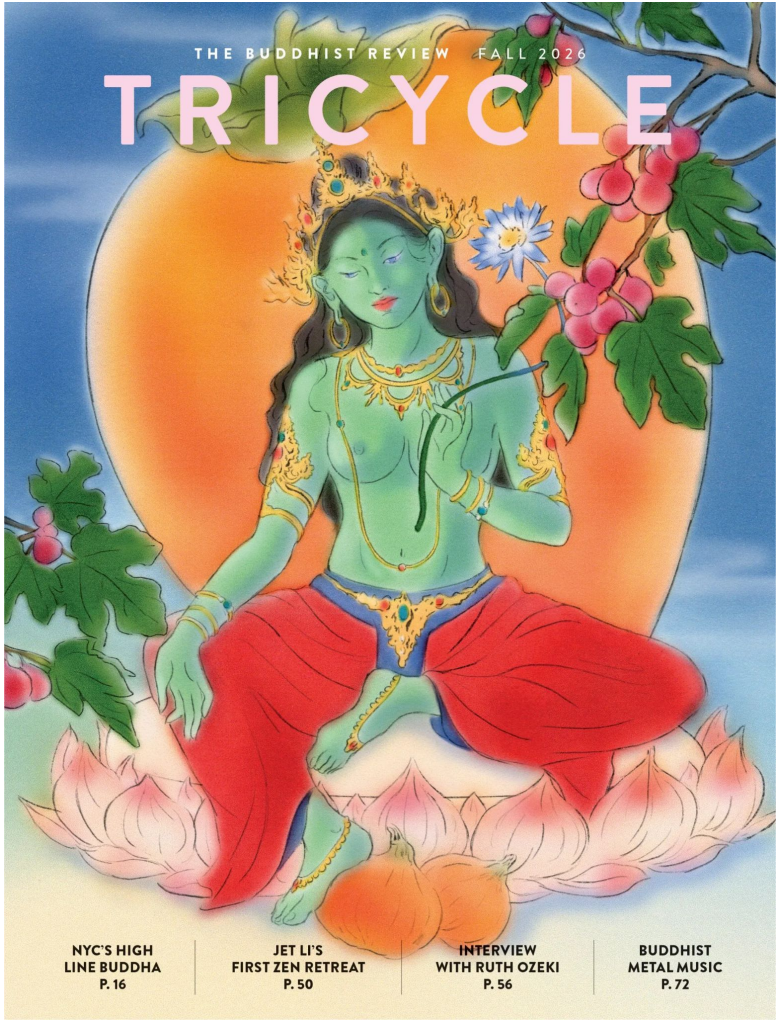
B. Alan Wallace. *The Attention Revolution* (2006)

Some major bodhisattvas

- Avalokiteshvira (China: Guanyin): compassion
- Tara, in 21 manifestations, most commonly green and white: help at a human level (Freya)
- Manjushri: wisdom (Odin)
- Vajrapani: protection and the power of the Buddha (Thor)
- Samantabhadra: kindness/happiness



Source: https://www.pure-land-buddhism.com/blog/guanyins-enlightenment-day


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Source: https://buddhismnow.com/2010/03/25/manjushri-bodhisattva/



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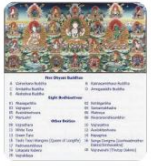
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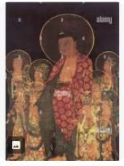
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Reduced Stunning Pair Of 18th-19th...

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Jambhala - Kuber - God of wealth...

Preliminary practices (ngöndro)

- **Prostrations (100,000 or so)**
- **Empowerment: guru yoga**
- **Mantra**
- **Visualization (deity yoga)**
- **Mandala**
- **Dream yoga/lucid dreaming**

Advanced practices

- Samatha
- Vipassana
- Dzogchen ("Great Perfection")
- Mahamudra ("Great Seal")
- Quite the assortment of esoteric tantric practices, some of which are indeed thoroughly antinomian and…above my pay grade…though historical discussions in Lopez's *Buddhism* show just how pervasive these have been, and often just for the usual objectives of mundane magick: love, wealth, health, smiting of enemies, etc.
- "Tibetan Book of the Dead" (exceedingly popular, but probably not what you think it is…)

Advanced meditation methods

- tummo—"inner fire"—meditation by advanced practitioners raised skin temperature in extremities by 12-degrees F, air temp for 5-degrees F
- Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche could measurably shift from awareness to metta meditation in seconds
- The potential effects of some of these are one reason for secrecy:
    - "Kundalini meditation"—which is not Tibetan per se but deep Hindu history and might influence some Tibetan methods—is quite an advanced combination of yoga, breathing (*pranayama*), and meditation methods, but without proper instruction can produce some fairly nasty effects known as "Kundalini psychosis." A skilled teacher—unlike, ahem, instructions found on the web—will not introduce a student to an advanced practice until they have mastered the appropriate preliminaries.

And since you are wondering, Newman on tantric sex

"All that stuff we've talked about in the past ten chapters on meditation, preparation practices such as 100,000 prostrations and 100,000 mantra recitations, visualizations and rituals: I'm guessing you're not going to find that in a 30-minute video downloaded from Pornhub"

- These are *very* advanced practices and Newman, despite very long experience, has never encountered them
- That said, lots of religious traditions posit linkages between spiritual and sexual energy, though by far the most common of response to this is celibacy
- Tibetan lamas hate it when this is one of the first things Westerners are interested in, and do not think this reflects well on Western culture.

Tibetan compared to Insight

- Advanced leadership is still primarily immigrants from Tibet, though there is some second-generation leadership
- Huge investment in land and temples, many in remote areas
- Strong emphasis on cosmological/immaterial aspects: completely opposite of scientific/rational "Protestant Buddhism"
- Emphasis on advanced meditation methods
    - Contrast to the Thai Forest advice: "You learned a fabulous new meditation method? Well, one more thing you'll need to learn to give up"
- Very large fairly recent—past 500 years—literature, albeit still mostly in Tibetan
- Tolerates feral children at events

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Visit Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple - Largest ...



The Guardian
They moved to a Buddhist retreat in ...

Katog Palace of the Secret Mantra that Guides Beings

Katog Drodul Sang Ngak Ling Potrang



Located in northwest Arkansas; https://katog.org/about-the-retreat-center/

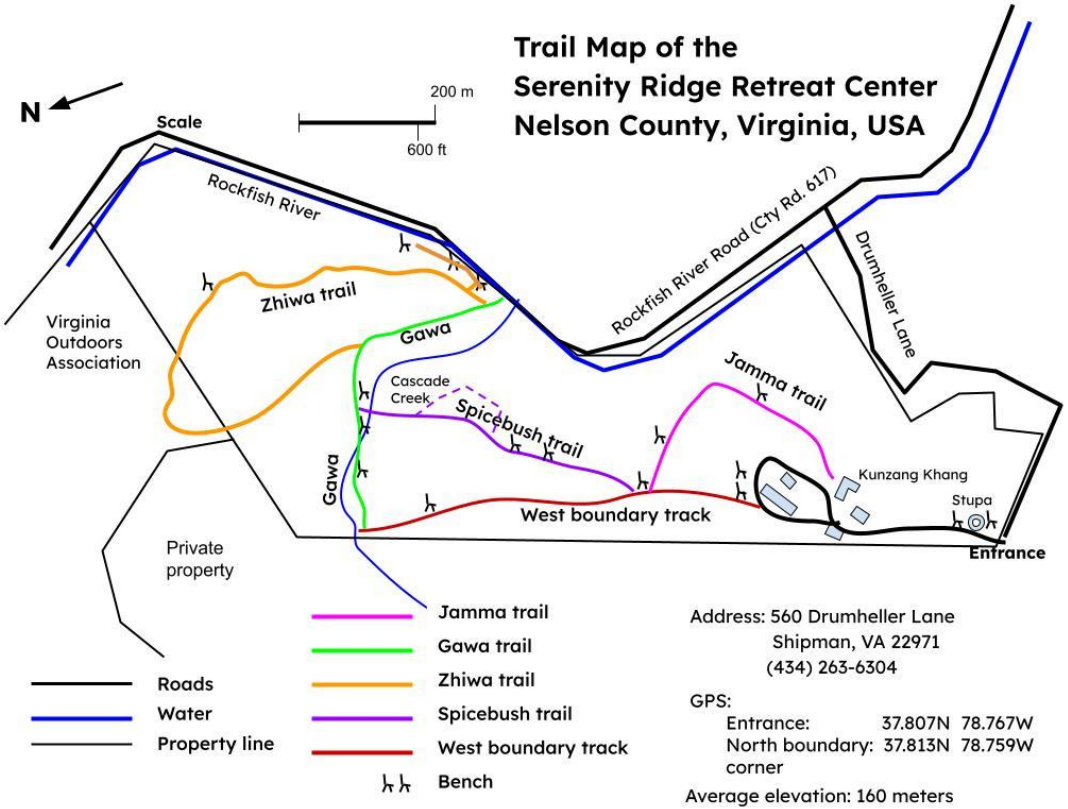


Bloomington, IN: https://tmbcc.org/

Serenity Ridge Retreat Center, Nelson County



Trail Map of the Serenity Ridge Retreat Center Nelson County, Virginia, USA



Address: 560 Drumheller Lane
Shipman, VA 22971
(434) 263-6304

GPS:

Entrance:	37.807N	78.767W
North boundary corner:	37.813N	78.759W

Average elevation: 160 meters

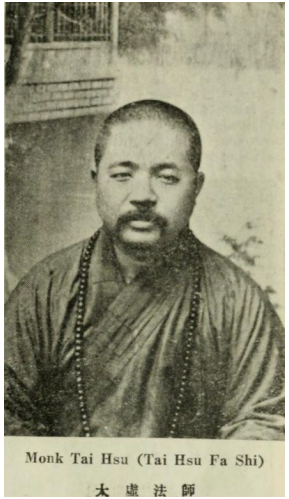
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24-Jun-2026

Thich Nhat Hanh,
The Order of Interbeing and
Plum village

Yet another modernizer: Taixu

Taixu January 8, 1890 – March 17, 1947)[2][3][4] was a Chan Buddhist modernist in southern China, activist and thinker who advocated for a reformation and revival of Chinese Buddhism by drawing upon eclectic domestic and foreign sources and ideologies. [Wikipedia]


Monk Tai Hsu (Tai Hsu Fa Shi)
太虛法師

Various reforms advocated by Taixu

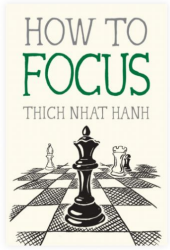
- Dramatically reduce the number of monastics, with those remaining involved primarily in education and charitable work along the Christian model
- Reconciling Buddhism and modern science where possible
- Increasing the role of women in Buddhism, and advocating for modern roles of women in society as a whole
- Inter-religious dialogue, but as equals
- The "Pure Land" can be in the present world

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022)

- Entered monastic life at age 16; as typical in Vietnam, trained in both Theravadan and Mahayana traditions. Ordained in Saigon in 1951; receives Zen "lamp transmission" at the Từ Hiếu Temple (Hue) in 1966.
- 1955-1957: served as the editor of *Phật Giáo Việt Nam* (*Vietnamese Buddhism*), the official publication of the General Association of Vietnamese Buddhists until it is discontinued by senior monks unhappy with the contents
- 1957-1960: Founds an independent "monastic 'community of resistance' near Đà Lạt. During this period, he taught at a nearby high school and continued to write, promoting the idea of a humanistic, unified Buddhism." [Wikipedia] These efforts are also received less than enthusiastically by the Vietnamese Buddhist establishment.
- 1960-1963: Studied and taught at Princeton, Columbia and Cornell thanks to a Fulbright grant, also keeping him [literally] out of the line of fire during the Buddhist-led crisis of 1963 which led to the overthrow of the Catholic government. Returns to Vietnam at this point.
- Engaged in a variety of "engaged Buddhism" social welfare actions; associated monastics were quite involved in the Vietnamese politics of the day but also skeptical about Buddhist exercising direct political power, preferring political neutrality.
- Exiled during world tour (during which time he would help persuade Martin Luther King to oppose Vietnam War), and also denounced by by Vietnamese Communist government. I.e. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall catch hell from both sides" [sign on the office wall of Justice Department attorney Burke Marshall during US civil rights movement]

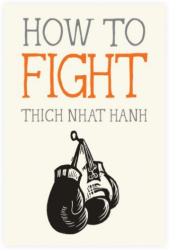
Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022)

- Organizes extensive efforts rescuing "boat people" after the North Vietnamese victory in 1975
- In late 1960s, founds the Order of Inter-being, which eventually will have about a dozen monasteries around the world
- Following time in Paris, In southern France, establishes the Plum Village monastic and retreat center in southern France (successor to the smaller Sweet Potatoes Meditation Center near Paris) from essentially nothing—plants 1000 plum trees—and over time Order of Inter-being expands very substantially
- Writes 130+ books, mostly in English, and founds Parallax Press in 1986) and pamphlets, and has 4000 recorded talks
- Finally is able to return to Vietnam for to give talks 2005-2007, though relations with the community government remained rocky and various efforts at Buddhist activism (not just his) were violently suppressed.
- Paralyzed by a severe stroke in 2014 for the last eight years of his life; is allowed to return to permanently Vietnam in 2018. Plum Village passes to the collective of the sangha led by his long-time assistant, Sister Chan Khong (b. 1938)



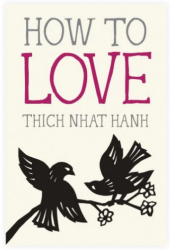
How To Focus

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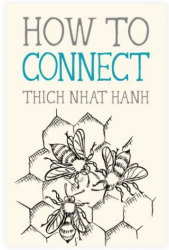
How to Fight

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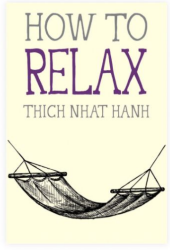
How to Love

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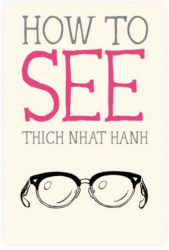
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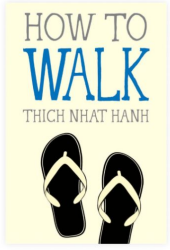
How to Relax

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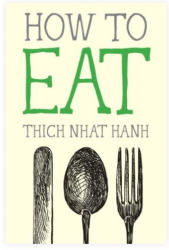
How to See

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How to Eat

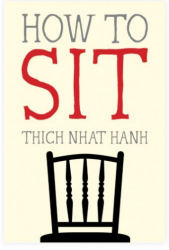
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How to Live Box Set

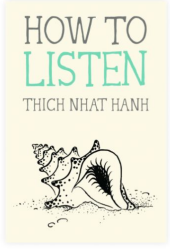
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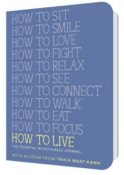
How to Sit

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How to Listen

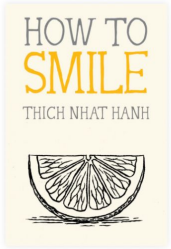
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How to Live

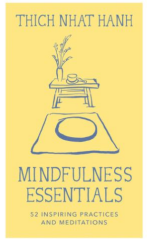
The Essential Mindfulness Journal

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How to Smile

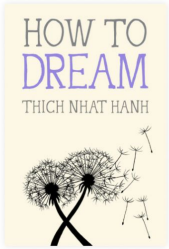
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Mindfulness Essentials Cards

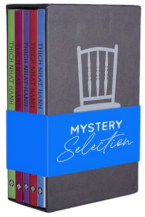
52 Inspiring Practices and Meditations

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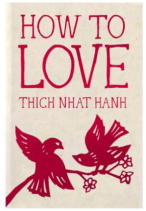
How to Dream

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Mystery How To Box

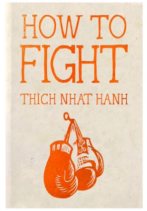
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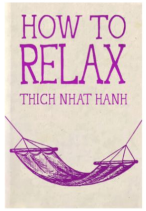
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How to Fight

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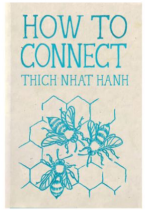
Thich Nhat Hanh



How to Relax

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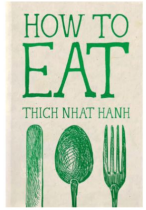
Thich Nhat Hanh



How to Connect

Hardcover Gift Edition

Thich Nhat Hanh



How to Eat

Available Early at parallax.org: December 22, 2026.

About us

Parallax Press is a nonprofit publisher cofounded by Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh and Arnold Kotler. We publish books and media on the art of mindful living and Engaged Buddhism. We are committed to offering teachings that help transform suffering and injustice. Our aspiration is to contribute to collective insight and awakening, bringing about a more joyful, healthy, and compassionate society.

Global Sangha Map

Sanghas practicing in the Plum Village tradition.

827,115 views

Published on December 23, 2022

SHARE

Sangha Directory

- All Ages
- Young Adults (Wake Up)
- Startup
- Practice Center
- Resource



Deer Park Monastery, Escondido, CA



Thich Naht Hanh's Order of Interbeing: 14 Mindfulness Trainings

1. Openness
2. Non-attachment to views
3. Freedom of thought
    - *Very* strong emphasis on tolerance in these first three trainings, e.g. "I am determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even Buddhist ones."
4. Awareness of suffering
5. Simple, healthy living
6. Dealing with anger
7. Dwelling happily in the present moment
8. Community and communication
9. Truthful and loving speech
10. Protecting the sangha
11. Right livelihood
12. Reverence for life
13. Generosity
    - includes a ecodharma component
14. Right conduct
    - specifically sexual conduct

The 14 Mindfulness Trainings of Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing

1. Openness

Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, I am determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist teachings are guiding means to help me learn to look deeply and to develop my understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill or die for.

2. Non-attachment to Views

Aware of suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, I am determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. I will learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to others' insights and experiences. I am aware that the knowledge I presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life and I will observe life within and around me in every moment, ready to learn throughout my life.

3. Freedom of Thought

Aware of the suffering brought about when I impose my views on others, I am committed not to force others, even my children, by any means whatsoever – such as authority, threat, money, propaganda or indoctrination – to adopt my views. I will respect the right of others to be different and to choose what to believe and how to decide. I will, however, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness through compassionate dialogue.

Source: http://bloominglotussangha.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/the-fourteen-mindfulness-trainings.pdf

Modernization and elaboration of the Five Precepts: example from precept of avoiding substances that cloud the minds

Nourishment and Healing

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will practice looking deeply into how I consume the Four Kinds of Nutriments, namely edible foods, sense impressions, volition, and consciousness. I am determined not to gamble, or to use alcohol, drugs, or any other products which contain toxins, such as certain websites, electronic games, TV programs, films, magazines, books, and conversations. I will practice coming back to the present moment to be in touch with the refreshing, healing and nourishing elements in me and around me, not letting regrets and sorrow drag me back into the past nor letting anxieties, fear, or craving pull me out of the present moment. I am determined not to try to cover up loneliness, anxiety, or other suffering by losing myself in consumption. I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy, and well-being in my body and consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

Impressions of Plum Village approach

- Plum Village itself is largest Buddhist monastery in Europe; also includes a number of lay followers. Monks and nuns are celibate
- Fairly general Mahayana approach
- In North America, emphasis is on relatively small and simple "house church" sanghas; large sanghas will split
- Pretty much a fixed format of the "service", not unlike Christian services.
- As with Tibetan, and based on pictures, retreats seem rather child friendly compared to Insight and Zen
- Consistent with Taixu, focus is on this world, not the cosmology



https://plumvillage.org/about/plum-village

"Order of worship" for CVille's Cloud Floating Free

- Guided meditation
- Walking meditation (which more generally is seriously a Plum Village thing…)
- Silent meditation
- Sharing of names of people/"notions" in need of care
- Metta (lovingkindness) meditation and dedication of merit
- Individual introductions
- Short more or less silent break for tea
- Reading from a work of Thich Nhat Hanh
- "Dharma sharing" by individuals
- Traditional five recollections
- Modernized version of three jewels

Note absence of an offertory…

Challenges moving forward

- TNH very explicitly saw development as an ongoing process that would be determined by the sangha, not an individual.
  - "The next Buddha is a sangha"
  - "An ancient plum tree has very deep, very old roots. Yet every spring, the flowers, blossoms, and leaves are completely new. They're no less fresh than the blossoms on a young plum tree."
  - Is this the long-awaited, modernized "Protestant Buddhism"? Or at least the latest iteration.
- Continuing evolution of the mutually supporting monastic and lay sanghas
- Continuing evolution of "socially engaged Buddhism"
- Adaptations to the digital age
  - 4,000 videos does not mean the creation of a "virtual Thay", however tempting this will be
  - But they've got a really nice app!

Ting 11:23 88%

Home

It only takes a gentle breath and all kinds of miracles are there.

THICH NHAT HANH

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