

Name: Order of Interbeing  
Leader: Thich Nhat Hanh  
Tradition: Zen  
Locations: Internationally  
URL: <http://www.interbeing.org.uk>, <http://www.plumvillage.org/index.htm>,  
<http://www.deerparkmonastery.org/>

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Dear Buddhist Chaplains,

Thank you for your interest in learning more about the aspirant process for receiving the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings in a formal ceremony, and joining the core community of the Order of Interbeing. The intention of this process is to nourish happiness and the intention and capacity to help others be happy--to nourish the capacity to be fully present, dwelling happily in the present moment (the 7th of the 14 Mindfulness Trainings).

The process often but not always includes practice with one or more mentors, an aspirants' group or class, regular practice with a sangha, and participation in retreats and days of mindfulness. It generally includes attention to the deepening of the aspirant's willingness and capacity to:

- o- transform suffering in oneself and to assist others in transforming suffering
- o- practice mindfulness, understanding, and compassion in daily life with respect to oneself, one's circle of family, friends, workplace, organizational, and sangha communities
- o- contribute energy to sangha-building
- o- offer practices and teachings developed in Thich Nhat Hanh's socially engaged practice tradition for the benefit of everyone

The following reflections about this process have developed from experience during the last decade or so in various communities. They are, however, only reflections, and are offered for those who would like this kind of clarification. They are not "written in stone"! Please feel at ease with using them as appropriate, and with inquiring further, as there can be much flexibility according to what is beneficial practice for each person.

Some steps you may have already taken, or may like to proceed with:

- 1) In a formal ceremony, receive all five mindfulness trainings as articulated in the practice of the Plum Village Community and Thich Nhat Hanh. (sometimes it happens that someone has received the trainings in another Buddhist practice traditionâ€¦)
- 2) Read *Interbeing* by Thich Nhat Hanh--this book includes Thich Nhat Hanh's commentaries on the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, as well as the Charter of the Order of Interbeing. Other recommended readings: *For A Future to be Possible, Commentaries on the Five Mindfulness Trainings* by Thich Nhat Hanh; *Learning True Love: How I Learned and Practiced Social Change in Vietnam* by Sr Chan Khong, for the history of the Order of Interbeing in Vietnam.
- 3) Practice with a local Sangha for at least six months, preferably longer. You may have to establish one yourself, with your friends, family, or at your workplace. If you would like support in doing this, please be in touch with Order of Interbeing members or sangha facilitators. A directory of sanghas is available at [www.iamhome.org](http://www.iamhome.org). Other website resources for books and Dharma talks are: [www.plumvillage.org](http://www.plumvillage.org) and [www.parallax.org](http://www.parallax.org).
- 4) Be aware that receiving the 14 Mindfulness Trainings and joining the core community of the Order of Interbeing includes a commitment to doing one's best to embody the practice of

mindfulness, love, compassion and understanding in our daily lives and relationships, and helping to awaken bodhicitta (a mind of love) in ourselves and others. Other commitments include:

- o- practicing at least 60 days of mindfulness a year;
  - o- practicing with and offering sustaining energy to a Sangha (sanghabuilding);
  - o- reciting the 14 Mindfulness Trainings with others every two weeks;
  - o- not using alcohol, as stated in the 5th of the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and the 5th of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings;
  - o- attending a retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh at least once a year, if possible.
- o- It is helpful to subscribe to the journal *The Mindfulness Bell*. There is an Order of Interbeing Directory and several email lists which Order members may join if they would like to stay in touch in this way with other Order members.
- o- Order members often help staff large retreats with Thich Nhat Hanh and lead days of mindfulness in their regional sanghas.

Next Step: When, having received the Five Mindfulness Trainings and practiced with a sangha for at least a year, you are clear that you would like to formally state your aspiration for receiving the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings at some time in the future, please write a dated letter to a Dharma Teacher in your area/region. This letter can be a few sentences, as simple as, "I have an aspiration to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings and join the core community of the Order of Interbeing in a formal ceremony, at some time in the future. I understand that the usual time for "mentoring" is often several years from the date of this letter." During the next period of time, aspirants deepen their own practice, their happiness, and their capacity to offer happiness to others. They offer energy to an ongoing practice Sangha, or organize a Sangha if there is not currently a Sangha practicing in Thich Nhat Hanh's practice tradition near them.

If there is no Dharma Teacher yet in your area, please be in touch with a Dharma Teacher you know, or with Green Mountain Dharma Center or Deer Park Monastery (contact information at [www.deerparkmonastery.org](http://www.deerparkmonastery.org) and [www.greenmountaincenter.org](http://www.greenmountaincenter.org).)

As appropriate, please share your aspiration to receive the 14MT and join the core community of the Order of Interbeing with your sangha, people you live with, and your family, so that this process will be one of mutual support and goes in the direction of deepening love, not conflict and division.

Further Next steps:

a) Start a 14 Mindfulness Training Journal, in which you can choose one or more of the trainings for daily or weekly reflection in writing. It can be wonderful practice to share your writing with another practitioner, but there is no "requirement" for this.

b) Develop support for deepening practice for yourself as an aspirant. This could include:

1) Join or Start an Aspirant Support Group--participate in an aspirant support group or, if there are no other aspirants in your area, a study group on the 14 MT. Join one or take the initiative to form one yourself. In this group, participants can study and practice together. It is very helpful to commit to regular Beginning Anew practice, beginning with a focus on the element of flower-watering.

2) Establish Relationships with Mentors/Practice Partners--be regularly in touch with one or more Order of Interbeing members, several of whom live in your local area, if possible. Make expectations as clear as possible. Given impermanence it is preferable to be in touch with at

least three OI members as practice partners/mentors. This also allows you differing perspectives on the meaning to different people of formally receiving these trainings. The connection can be in person, by telephone, letter, or email. Be clear about agreements re who takes the initiative to call, how frequently, what happens when someone cannot be available, etc. As these relationships develop and deepen, it is helpful to include flower-watering and the other elements of Beginning Anew practice (beneficial regret; deepening understanding through sharing hurt feelings in nonviolent communication; request/proposal for action that can restore harmony; gratitude). These can be infused informally into communication, and/or be practiced in a formal way.

In both the aspirant support group and the practice partner/mentoring process, topics for reflection can include:

1) Individual practice, including daily life relationships (family, friends, workplace, sangha); transforming grief, anger and fear and other forms of suffering; reflecting on alcohol consumption, sexual responsibility, etc; 60 days of mindfulness; daily "formal" sitting and walking practice, etc; Readings: Blooming of A Lotus; Present Moment, Wonderful Moment; Peace Is Every Step; Essential Writings; Anger; No Death, No Fear; The Miracle of Mindfulness.

2) Sangha practice, including participating in and contributing to local sangha building, for example, offering instruction in sitting, walking, eating, hugging meditation; sounding the bell; singing and mindful movement practice. Practice with mindful communication and conflict transformation practices such as Metta/Lovingkindness Practice; Beginning Anew; NonViolent Communication; Mindful Mediation.  
Readings: Teachings on Love; Touching Peace; Friends on the Path; Joyfully Together; Being Peace; A Basket of Plums (songbook and CD); Mindfulness Practice Center Manual; Pamphlets: How to Enjoy Your Stay at Plum Village; Sangha Practice.

3) Study, including study and practice of the sutras and books especially by Thich Nhat Hanh. Get a copy of the Plum Village Chanting Book and Thay's commentaries on the following sutras: Full Awareness of Breathing (Breathe! You Are Alive!); Four Establishments of Mindfulness (Transformation and Healing); The Better Way to be Alone (Our Appointment with Life). Other helpful study/practice books for a group: Peace Is Every Step; Being Peace; The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings; Transformation at the Base; Call Me By My True Names (poetry); Old Path, White Clouds; Essential Writings.

4) Service/Socially Engaged Practice, including awareness, service, support for socially engaged meditation and action. Helpful Texts: the five and fourteen mindfulness trainings; Sr Chan Khong's book Learning True Love; Love in Action and The Raft Is Not the Shore by Thich Nhat Hanh; Be Free Where You Are (talk at a prison); Path of Compassion; Engaged Buddhist Reader. (Also: Turning Wheel Magazine from the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and many books by other authors, for example, Joanna Macy)

5) Wider Sangha Connection-give yourself the gift of time at Plum Village, Deer Park Monastery, Green Mountain Dharma Center/Maple Forest Monastery. Please be aware that receiving the 14 Mindfulness Trainings also means joining the core community of the Order of Interbeing. It is helpful to understand the history and continuing changing of this Order. Deepen your willingness and capacity for "cross-cultural" communication: lay-monastic connection, English-speaking/Vietnamese-speaking and other languages/racial/ethnic group connection; elders-youngers connection, etc.

Readings: A Joyful Path; I Have Arrived, I Am Home; Stepping into Freedom; Finding Our True Home: Pure Land Is Here and Now; Journal: The Mindfulness Bell (subscribe-and read back copies!)

6) History-Buddhism; Buddhism in Vietnam; the Order of Interbeing. Readings: Old Path, White Clouds; Master Tang Hoi; Hermitage in the Clouds; Stone Boy and Other Stories; A Taste of

Earth; Learning True Love (Sr Chan Khong). Journal: The Mindfulness Bell (subscribe-and read back copies!)

7) Root Traditions/Interfaith Understandings-

Readings: Living Buddha, Living Christ; Going Home. Re Judaism-other authors, for example, Sylvia Boorstein.

8) Twelve Questions-

Reading: The Mindfulness Bell, #21, April 1998, p 13. Many of these questions reflect the above topics, but may be an easier "gateway."

### **Questions for Reflection**

These questions for reflection were developed during the Community of Mindfulness, NY Metro aspirant process and were published in The Mindfulness Bell #21, April 1998 pg. 13.

1. Why do I want to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings?
2. Why have I decided to state my aspiration to receive the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings in a formal ceremony at this time?
3. How has my practice of mindfulness (understanding, love, and compassion) helped me to transform my suffering (anger, fear, depression, craving/neediness, despair, distractions; specific relationships and past and current experiences of suffering)? What are challenges in the practice for me at this time? Where is my "growing edge"?
4. What time and energy can I offer at this time and over the next few years to take responsibility for the well-being of the Sangha with whom I practice? How am I communicating with my Sangha about my deepening aspiration, to encourage support and avoid divisiveness?
5. Where am I with my relationships with my family? with Order of Interbeing members? with other Sangha members? In what ways am I practicing in the direction of "resolving all conflicts, however small"?
6. Where am I in relation to mindful consumption: alcohol (as interpreted in Thay's tradition); and other consumption, including TV?
7. How long and in what contexts have I been practicing within Thay's tradition (local Sangha, Plum Village, retreats, reading)?
8. What is my relationship with my "root" tradition(s)? How do I see the connections in my life between my root tradition(s) and Thay's practice and teachings?
9. How long and in what contexts have I been practicing with other meditation traditions? How do I integrate these experiences with Thay's practice and teachings?
10. How do I use the practice of mindfulness in the context of my workplace and livelihood? How would I like to do this even more?
11. What is my "socially engaged" practice and aspiration?
12. Other questions and concerns about my practice, about the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings, and about joining the core community of the Order of Interbeing are: (fill in)

## Other Reflections:

1) "Pre-Aspirant" Period. It is sometimes very beneficial for there to be a "pre-aspirant process," in which someone is in regular contact with a Dharma Teacher, the monastic community, and/or the local sangha, and is considering becoming an aspirant, but either the aspirant or the Dharma Teacher believe that a continuing ripening process is beneficial, before a formal aspiring letter is written.

2) Aspirant Support Ceremony. Sometimes it has been supportive to have a formal ceremony during which an aspirant's sangha can offer support to the aspirant(s) in a public way. This ceremony can be adapted from the 14 MT transmission ceremony.

3) Impermanence and Diversity. It is helpful to remember that this aspirant application and support process is continually changing, and is co-created, for the well-being of ourselves and our societies, to meet particular and changing needs of aspirants, mentors/practice partners, the international Order of Interbeing.

## About Lyn Fine

Lyn Fine received Lamp Transmission as a Dharma Teacher from Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in 1994. A peace educator and trainer in peer counseling, mindful mediation, and compassionate listening, she leads mindfulness retreats and offers consultation support for individuals and sanghas in the socially engaged practice tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Lyn received a doctorate in International Education and Peace Studies in 1995 from New York University, where her dissertation research focused on "Children of War Becoming Leaders for Peace." A student of the Buddha's teachings since the mid-1970s, Lyn's multirooted mindfulness practice is nourished by her Jewish heritage as well as by the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing. Raised in New York City, Lyn currently enjoys living in Berkeley, CA, with her mom, who is 96, and near other members of her family of origin.

## From the United Kingdom Order of Interbeing Manual

### 4.2 The Mindfulness Trainings

#### The Five Mindfulness Trainings

##### The First Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to support any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

##### The Second Mindfulness Training

Aware of suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants and minerals. I will practise generosity by sharing my time, energy and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

##### The Third Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and

the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

#### The Fourth Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticise or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

#### The Fifth Mindfulness Training

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 practising mindful eating, drinking and consuming. I will ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being and joy in my body, in my consciousness and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programmes, magazines, books, films and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger and confusion in myself and in society by practising a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

## The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings

### The First Mindfulness Training: 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.

### The Second Mindfulness Training: Nonattachment 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 practise 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.

### The Third Mindfulness Training: 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.

### The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Awareness of Suffering

Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help me develop compassion and find ways out of suffering, I am determined not to avoid or close my eyes before suffering. I am committed to finding ways, including personal contact, images and sounds, to be with those who suffer, so I can understand their situation deeply and help them transform their suffering into compassion, peace and joy.

### The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Simple, Healthy Living

Aware that true happiness is rooted in peace, solidity, freedom and compassion, and not in wealth or fame, I am determined not to take as the aim of my life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure, nor to accumulate wealth while millions are hungry and dying. I am committed to living simply and sharing my time, energy and material resources with those in real need. I will practise mindful consuming, not using alcohol, drugs or any other products that bring toxins into my own and the collective body and consciousness.

### The Sixth Mindfulness Training: Dealing with Anger

Aware that anger blocks communication and creates suffering, I am determined to take care of the energy of anger when it arises and to recognise and transform the seeds of anger that lie deep in my consciousness. When anger comes up, I am determined not to do or say anything, but to practise mindful breathing or mindful walking and acknowledge, embrace and look deeply into my anger. I will learn to look with the eyes of compassion on those I think are the cause of my anger.

### The Seventh Mindfulness Training: Dwelling Happily in the Present Moment

Aware that life is available only in the present moment and that it is possible to live happily in the here and now, I am committed to training myself to live deeply each moment of daily life. I will try not to lose myself in dispersion or be carried away by regrets about the past, worries about the future, or craving, anger or jealousy in the present. I will practise mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. I am determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wondrous, refreshing and healing elements that are inside and around me, and by nourishing seeds of joy, peace, love and understanding in myself, thus facilitating the work of transformation and healing in my consciousness.

### The Eighth Mindfulness Training: Community and Communication

Aware that lack of communication always brings separation and suffering, I am committed to training myself in the practice of compassionate listening and loving speech. I will learn to listen deeply without judging or reacting and refrain from uttering words that can create discord or cause the community to break. I will make every effort to keep communications open and to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

### The Ninth Mindfulness Training: Truthful and Loving Speech

Aware that words can create suffering or happiness, I am committed to learning to speak truthfully and constructively, using only words that inspire hope and confidence. I am determined not to say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people, nor to utter words that might cause division or hatred. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain nor criticise or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will do my best to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten my safety.

### The Tenth Mindfulness Training: Protecting the Sangha

Aware that the essence and aim of a Sangha is the practise of understanding and compassion, I am determined not to use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit or transform our community into a political instrument. A spiritual community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

### The Eleventh Mindfulness Training: Right Livelihood

Aware that great violence and injustice have been done to the environment and society, I am committed not to live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. I will do my best to select a livelihood that helps realise my ideal of understanding and compassion. Aware of global economic, political and social realities, I will behave responsibly as a consumer and as a citizen, not investing in companies that deprive others of their chance to live.

### The Twelfth Mindfulness Training: Reverence for Life

Aware that much suffering is caused by war and conflict, I am determined to cultivate non-violence, understanding and compassion in my daily life, to promote peace education, mindful mediation and reconciliation, within families, communities, nations and in the world. I am determined not to kill and not to let others kill. I will diligently practise deep looking with my Sangha to discover better ways to protect life and prevent war.

### The Thirteenth Mindfulness Training: Generosity

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants and minerals. I will practise generosity by sharing my time, energy and material resources with those who are in need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but will try to prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of others beings.

### The Fourteenth Mindfulness Training: Right Conduct (for lay members)

Aware that sexual relations motivated by craving cannot dissipate the feeling of loneliness, but will create more suffering, frustration and isolation, I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual understanding, love and a long-term commitment. In sexual relations, I must be aware of future suffering that may be caused. I know that to preserve the happiness of myself and others, I must respect the rights and commitments of myself and others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to protect couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. I will treat my body with respect and preserve my vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realisation of my bodhisattva ideal. I will be fully aware of the responsibility for bringing new lives in the world, and will meditate on the world into which we are bringing new beings.