

BLOOM OF THE PRESENT INSIGHT MEDITATION
NOBLE PATH PROGRAM for Dedicated Dharma Practitioners
September 2017 - June 2018
TOPIC: "Emptiness and Natural Awareness"

"The usefulness of a cup is its emptiness."

- Zen saying

"Thanks to emptiness, everything is possible."

- Nagarjuna

"And the emptiness turns its face to us and whispers, 'I am not empty, I am open.'"

- Thomas Transtromer

The Buddhist concept of "emptiness" can be one of the more perplexing teachings of the Dharma. Yet it is by knowing emptiness directly that we touch on the truth of who and what we really are. Emptiness provides the key to liberation by unraveling our patterns of suffering.

This 10-month course will explore the teachings and practices that can help us see through our conditioned, constructed views into the open nature of reality. We will investigate what is meant by emptiness through an exploration of emptiness of self, emptiness of phenomena, and emptiness of awareness itself. We will learn how to repeatedly interrupt our fabricated and reified frameworks to discover a non-conceptual presence.

Practice helps us shift from a limited ego-based identity to this boundless awareness-based presence. This undistracted, embodied awareness is unencumbered by the resistance, struggle and clinging that usually define our life. Little by little the tight grip of our confusion and fears releases into the openness of just being.

By practicing "radical" mindfulness - an awareness that allows all experience to just be - we can begin to connect to our deeper nature beyond our surface dramas and our inner storyteller. Natural awareness is vast, empty and welcoming; we can learn to abide there.

It takes a courageous and loving heart to face these existential truths. This NPP program will also include practices of compassion to help us be more at ease with ourselves and with the nature of reality. We will also examine how emptiness is the ultimate source of all compassion.

APPLICATION INFORMATION for NPP returning students:

APPLY NOW!

Program is limited to 18 participants.

Final deadline: August 1, 2017. If full, you will be put on a waiting list.

By participating in this program you are making a commitment that includes:

- Daily meditation practice
- Your attendance at 2 weekend residential retreats.

- Daylong monthly retreats.
- Completing the readings, practices, and reflections that are assigned each month.
- Monthly small group meeting.
- Individual interviews with Carla Brennan every other month.
- Monthly meeting with your dharma buddy.
- Although 100% attendance is not required, you will be expected to attend at least 80%. It is particularly important to attend the two weekend retreats.
- You are also asked to attend at least one 7-day or longer silent residential retreat during the year with an Insight Meditation teacher or with a recommended Tibetan Buddhist or Zen teacher.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE - DATES

Thursday September 14 - Sunday, September 17, 2017, Weekend Retreat, Jikoji Zen Center
 Saturday, October 21, 2017 - Daylong
 Saturday, November 18, 2017 - Daylong
 Saturday, December, 16, 2017 - Daylong
 Saturday, January 20, 2018 - Daylong
 Saturday, February 24, 2018 - Daylong
 Saturday, March 24, 2018 - Daylong
 Saturday, April 21, 2018 - Daylong
 Saturday, May 19, 2018 - Daylong
 Thursday - Sunday, June 2018, Weekend Retreat, Details TBA.

The daylongs will be 9:30 - 4:00 pm and meet in Santa Cruz.

The monthly small peer groups, dharma buddy communication and individual meetings with Carla will be scheduled as convenient.

PROGRAM COST

The weekend retreats will have fees to cover accommodations and food. (Partial scholarships are available.) We will attempt to keep expenses as low as possible. You will be notified of these costs when they are determined. You will need to get the book, *Emptiness: A Practical Guide for Meditators* by GuyArmstrong. There may be additional books recommended.

Support of the teaching will be on a donation basis; there will be a suggested sliding scale. You are free to donate more or less. Please consider a donation amount that covers the entire program, even for those retreats you do not attend.

NOBLE PATH PROGRAM for Dedicated Dharma Practitioners 2017-2018

TOPIC: Emptiness and Natural Awareness

APPLICATION FORM

Final deadline: August 1, 2017. If full, you will be put on a waiting list.

Please include your personal contact information and your responses to each of the following questions. Please email it to Carla (brennan.carla@gmail.com). Make sure you number your

answers with the same number as the questions. Your answers are confidential. After Carla receives and reviews your application, a meeting will be scheduled to answer any questions.

TODAY'S DATE:

NAME:

TELEPHONE:

MOBILE PHONE:

HOME STREET ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

DATE OF BIRTH:

OCCUPATION:

1. Why do you want to be in the Noble Path Program? What is your specific interest in the program topic, "Emptiness and Natural Awareness"? Please spend some time reflecting on this important question and answer it thoroughly.
2. When did you begin Insight Meditation (vipassana) practice? If you have experience in other Buddhist traditions (Tibetan, Zen, etc.), when did you begin those practices?
3. There is a requirement of at least 20 days total of residential silent retreat days. Please include a list of these retreats, with place, date and teachers. If you have attended many retreats, only list your several most recent (or most significant) retreats. You can include retreats in all Buddhist traditions. (If many, summarize.)
4. What is the longest silent residential Buddhist retreat you have attended?
5. Whom do you regard as your primary Buddhist teacher(s)? (This may also include teachers you do not know personally but who have been influential through retreat experience or reading.)
6. Describe your current regular meditation practice. Include the length/amount as well as the type of meditation you do most commonly. (For example, mindfulness, concentration, metta, open awareness, walking, etc.) Do you regularly do other Buddhist practices, such as chanting, etc.?
7. Do you have a significant past history or current relationship to non-Buddhist spiritual teachers, non-Buddhist spiritual practices or other forms of personal growth (physical, psychological, creative, etc. Examples: yoga, qigong, Diamond Heart, etc.)? Please describe.
8. What Buddha-dharma study and reading have you done? Please include important books, classes, dedicated practitioner programs, etc. (Just a summary.)

9. Are you currently part of a sitting group or sangha? Please describe.
10. Do you have any physical or psychological issues that might impact your ability to participate fully in this program?
11. Please note any other information you would like us to know.