



Kenley Neufeld <kenleyneufeld@gmail.com>

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## Re:: OI mentoring process, from Joanne Friday

4 messages

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LynFine@aol.com <LynFine@aol.com>

Wed, Nov 7, 2007 at 11:50 AM

To: lotusforyou@comcast.net, calebcushing@sbcglobal.net, berjazz@sbcglobal.net, glennyfrank@yahoo.com, cvyo@high-spirits.com, alexast@jps.net, Jsbehrends@aol.com, bbdog@pacific.net, cathynason@sbcglobal.net, somurphy@email.sjsu.edu, MindfulYoga@earthlink.net, miriamg42@sbcglobal.net, Patricia Frisch <pfrisch@pacbell.net>, advtorr@msn.com, MHolrt@sbcglobal.net, gregandterry@sbcglobal.net, brandy@pacbell.net, tnjscott@powernet.net, bopob@comcast.net, pathofmindfulness@gmail.com, Conradrw@aol.com, leslierawls@carolina.rr.com, jbell@youthbuild.org, travism@parallax.org, hacnguyen@yahoo.com, eshaneh@gmail.com, jeanluon@yahoo.com, LynFine@aol.com, ambrose@riseup.net, terry@parallax.org, olga.grinstead@ucsf.edu, thichtuluc@yahoo.com, ItsFriday@aol.com, wildrosefarm@seanet.com, bradyr@sidwell.edu, jlawlor@sonnenschein.com, elizwood@mit.edu, enomotoe@hawaii.edu, mitchell@stillwatermpc.org, chantri@crpcv.org, Jeanselmo@aol.com, dbohn@pipeline.com, marjoriem4@juno.com, pjtoy@juno.com, sangha@neuhouse.com

Hello Dear OI Friends!

FYI, here are descriptions of aspects of the OI mentoring process which Joanne Friday emailed me, at my request. I am forwarding them to folks in Northern California who I know of who are mentoring, and to others around the country who from time to time have expressed interest to me for discussing this topic.

Perhaps this email list can be expanded, and those who want to can share via email and conference call, so that we may all continue to support each other and the nourishing and deepening of our practice together!

East Bay folks are gathering on Dec 8, and perhaps some of what Joanne offers can be included in our discussion.

With love!

Lyn  
510-655-1628

From Dharma Teacher Joanne Friday (Rhode Island)

November 2007.

Mentoring and the Aspirant Process-

Here is the process we use:

When someone approaches me with an interest in becoming an aspirant I give them 12 Questions for Reflection to help them look deeply at their motivation and whether conditions are sufficient for them to make a commitment to sangha building at this time. (I have attached the questions.)

Then I meet with them so that they can share what they discovered when answering the questions. Frequently, if they are clear that they want to become a member of the Order, the questions have helped them to see areas in their lives that need their attention, or areas of their practice which could be stronger. I always ask them to look deeply at what they see as being the strengths of their practice and which areas might need to be strengthened. This helps me to offer them practices to help.

It also helps for the potential aspirant to get clear about their motivation. Many of us have been powerfully conditioned to want to "attain" something and make "progress". I find that many approach the aspirant process as they would an academic program wanting to complete the requirements and get the degree. This habit energy can be very strong and a real obstacle to stopping and getting in touch with our inner wisdom. When people can stop running after the answer outside of themselves, develop compassion for themselves and learn to use the practice to take very good care of themselves and transform their own suffering when it arises, they are able to be fully present to be of service to others. Then we can truly interbe and build a strong sangha.

Once they are clear about their aspiration, I ask them to write a letter to Thay (with a copy sent to Sister Annabel ) outlining their spiritual path so far and what has led them to enter the aspirant process at this time. I invite them to ask an Order member or two that they practice with regularly to mentor them. I then try to connect with those mentors so that we can share the process of supporting the aspirant.

I also share aspirant materials that have been compiled by other dharma teachers (many can be found at [www.mindfulnessnyc.org](http://www.mindfulnessnyc.org) under Links-San Francisco Bay Area Aspirants) They include suggested reading lists, practices, etc.

Then I meet with or check in with (by phone) the aspirant monthly and help them to look at how they are practicing the 14 Trainings in their daily lives. In our sangha, we have an aspirant group made up of Order members, aspirants and those contemplating joining the Order. We meet once a month. We have a Recitation Ceremony to recite the 14 Trainings. Aspirants can become familiar with the form and with the chants, etc. We then have a check in during which time the participants share which of the Fourteen particularly resonated with them or what has been happening during the month that gave them the opportunity to become more aware of their habits of mind and places they are caught and places where they were able to use the Fourteen and not get caught or stay caught.

We then share a potluck lunch and some hugging meditation.

During the process, the aspirant is also encouraged to attend retreats, days of mindfulness, take an active role in their sangha, organizing DOMS, sharing their practice, etc.

After the aspirant has been studying and practicing for at least a year...and now many sanghas are saying a minimum of 2 years, and the sangha, the dharma teacher and the mentors are all in agreement, the aspirant is invited to receive Ordination.

At that time, they complete an application to receive the Transmission of the Fourteen. They write a letter to describe how they have transformed their suffering, some of the insights they have had during the aspirant process and their motivation for wanting to receive the Transmission and become an Order member at this time. The sangha writes a letter of support, the dharma teacher writes a letter, the mentors write letters. All of these letters along with the application form are compiled into a packet which is sent to Thay. Copies of the packet are sent to Sr. Annabel, the Dharma teacher and a copy is kept by the aspirant.

Also in our sangha, we do a Shining of the Light near the beginning of the process and again 2-3 months before Ordination. This requires a lot of preparation and is a process about which I have written separately. Not everyone feels comfortable doing this and if not, it is better not to.

That's how we are supporting our aspirants at this time.

with much love, a deep bow and a bouquet of lotuses for you,  
Joanne  
Chan Lac Thi  
True Joy of Giving

## 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 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:

## **Shining the Light**

as done by the Clear Heart Sangha

Shining the Light is a wonderful practice. In the Three Refuges Chant, we chant "Dwelling in the refuge of Sangha, shining light that supports me, keeping my practice free of obstruction." This so beautifully describes the purpose of Shining the Light and it also describes the depth of our responsibility as a member of a sangha. When, as a sangha, we can shine the light skillfully, we are creating a refuge of love and support.

In our sangha we use this practice when someone states their aspiration to become an Order member and again a couple months before they are to be ordained.

Before having a Shining the Light Ceremony, we try to help everyone be well prepared. We like to have a month to prepare. The person who is having the light shone needs to invite those who will shine the light (6-10 people is usually a good size group). In our sangha we have an Aspirant Group and they are the ones that shine the light for the aspirant. We have had ceremonies where friends, colleagues and family members were included along with some sangha members. They are given the same instructions for preparation but may need to have some background information or some

questions answered. The person facilitating the ceremony sends handouts to all those who will be participating—we use the pages from the book Friends on the Path, compiled by Jack Lawlor.

We also like to remind people that it is a very deep practice for those shining the light as well as the one receiving. It requires deep looking. We need to look at our brother and sister and get in touch with what we truly appreciate about his or her practice. This is so we can offer three meaningful flower waterings.

We then need to look at their practice and with nothing but love and the deep desire for them to be free of suffering, we consider what we might share that could help them to strengthen their practice. In doing this, we need to be very honest with ourselves. What is our motivation for sharing? The only motivation must be a desire to help that is generated from love and compassion for the person who is receiving.

It is sometimes clear that when we look deeply at what we are wanting to share, we see that the shortcomings that we are aware of in the other person are ones we see in ourselves and that we are very dissatisfied with. Are we able to hold ourselves with love and compassion or do we judge and criticize ourselves? Are we able to hold our sangha sister or brother with only love and compassion or is there judgment and criticism? If we find that our motivation comes from a place of anger, resentment, judgment, blaming, criticism, etc., this is a good indication that we need to do some healing with ourselves. We need to hold those feelings that come up in ourselves, breathe and look deeply in order to better understand and transform them. If after practicing with ourselves, we still find that we are holding some resentment, then we need to do Beginning Anew with the person — not Shining the Light.

At the ceremony itself, after a period of silent sitting, the person who is facilitating offers a reminder about the above, someone reads the pages from Friends on the Path and the person facilitating offers the Meditation for Shining the Light Ceremony (from the new Chanting Book). We use the form that we use for a Dharma sharing. The first person who would like to share bows, shares 3 flower waterings (things that they appreciate about the person's practice) and a suggestion for deepening (if they have one). We invite the bell after each sharing. After everyone has shared, the person may or may not want to respond. In our experience there is usually a lot of gratitude and a feeling of really being loved. Many are very moved because others have taken the time and given so much thought to their spiritual development.

Everything that is shared must be out of love. Many of us have had a lot of conditioning with being harshly criticized and judged from a place of anger or resentment. For many, this is the first time that they have received suggestions from others that are really from a place of pure love and concern. It can be a very powerful experience.

As stated at the outset, it is a wonderful practice for those shining the light. We can learn so much about ourselves and find so many opportunities for transforming our own unskillful states of mind and suffering when we are preparing for the Ceremony. Illusions of a separate self can dissolve and we can realize our true nature of interbeing. We truly are the jewels of Indra's net.

We are aware that this practice has many forms and is practiced a bit differently in other sanghas and by the monastics. This is offered in the hope that others may adopt or adapt whatever may be useful to benefit their sanghas.

with much love and the joy of interbeing with all of you,

*Joanne*

Joanne Friday  
Chan Lac Thi  
True Joy of Giving  
for the Clear Heart Sangha

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**Kenley Neufeld <sangha@neuhouse.com>**  
To: LynFine@aol.com

**Wed, Nov 14, 2007 at 9:45 PM**

Dear Lyn,

Thank you so very much for sending this and including me in the list. It seems to be a clear outline and document. Just recently I have spoken with a couple of individuals who were interested in the Order of Interbeing and we have met and talked. The questions for reflection are particularly helpful to share, in addition to helping them find other more senior members to talk with.

I do have a specific question that I hope you can answer. If a person has been practicing in another Buddhist tradition for many years and has taken the precepts in that community, is it suggested the person also receive Thay's Mindfulness Trainings before proceeding into the mentorship process?

It would be good to talk sometime, particularly since we weren't able to hook-up at the retreat.

With gratitude for all that you do.

Kenley

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**LynFine@aol.com <LynFine@aol.com>**  
To: sangha@neuhouse.com

**Thu, Nov 15, 2007 at 10:19 AM**

Hi Kenley!

Thanks for checking in, and yes, we can set up some time to talk.

Re your question--yes, I would recommend receiving the 5MT in Thay's tradition--they are differently worded, and esp with respect to alcohol, the agreement as to their meaning is different from some other Buddhist traditions. Given that, there may be specific causes and conditions which would mean that a person could receive the 5MT and the 14MT at the same retreat. Of course, a person can begin practicing and studying with the 14MT whenever!

Just my view, others may perceive differently!

Love,

Lyn

In a message dated 11/14/2007 9:45:47 PM Pacific Standard Time, [sangha@neuhouse.com](mailto:sangha@neuhouse.com) writes:

I do have a specific question that I hope you can answer. If a person has been practicing in another Buddhist tradition for many years and has taken the precepts in that community, is it suggested the person also receive Thay's Mindfulness Trainings before proceeding into the mentorship process?

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See what's new at <http://www.aol.com>

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**Kenley Neufeld <sangha@neuhouse.com>**

**Wed, Dec 12, 2007 at 7:29 AM**

To: LynFine@aol.com

Alas, I have been busy with the end of the semester work and haven't had a chance to schedule a call with you. Our family is heading to Deer Park for 3-weeks starting on December 15th. Perhaps we'll see you in that time or we can talk sometime in the new year. Be well.

Great blessings.

Kenley

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