

New England Buddhist Vihara & Meditation Center's

Children's Newsletter

Welcome Back

We are proud to present the annual NEBV & MC Children's Newsletter. We had a very eventful year with multiple meditation retreats, Sil programs, fund raisings and various celebrations including celebration of Independence day, New Year and Vesak. We are very grateful to have bi-weekly Dhamma School for children and wish to express our sincere gratitude for the time and commitment of Dhamma School staff.

We would especially like to thank venerable Dhammajothi Thero and venerable Pannasiri thero for their constant guidance, blessings and invaluable service to the community.

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Sōpāka

Once there lived a boy named Sōpāka. He was really poor. When he was seven, his dad died, so his mother had to marry a different man. Sōpāka was very kind, and good, but his stepfather was really mean to him. He wanted to get rid of Sōpāka. So he was brought to a cemetery and was left there. He started to yell for help. Then the Buddha came and said "there is no need to be scared" He brought him to the temple and the Buddha fed, bathed and clothed Sōpāka.

Next day Sōpaka's mother came to the temple and started crying. "why are you so sad?" asked the Buddha. "My only child is lost! My husband brought him for a walk, but he never came back!" said the mom. "Don't worry, he is right here" said the Buddha and showed Sōpāka.

Seeing Oneself Through the Mirror of Mindfulness

Understanding oneself means to understand the behavior of one's mind. Dhamma is an exercise in itself. That exercise is seeing oneself by oneself. For example, a man can look in a mirror and notice that he has dark shadows on his unshaven face, or a woman might notice that her makeup is not in proper order. A mirror can be used to assess our physical appearance, but mindfulness is how we assess our thoughts.

Everyone has heard the word 'mindfulness', yet there is a fundamental level of misunderstanding about what it really means. Understanding actually means realizing the essence of the word mindfulness through the experience itself.

Let us now look at the mind. Generally, the mind changes from one thought to another. An analogy would be a monkey that jumps from tree to tree. Thoughts just occur and race without rhyme or reason. Mindfulness helps one to capture the right perspective at the very moment of a thought's emergence in the mind. What we are doing here is perceiving the rising thought at the very moment of its appearance. Are you used to noticing your thoughts at that moment? If not, you have not cultivated mindfulness. Mindfulness is something to be practiced

-Bhante Pannasiri

- Sayumi Prematillake

Inside The Buddhist Flag



The Buddhist flag is very recognizable symbol of Buddhism. It was originally designed in Colombo in 1885. There are six stripes on the Buddhist flag. Each stripe has a different color. The horizontal stripes represents the races of the world living in Harmony and the vertical stripes represent Eternal World Peace.

The colors of the stripes are blue, yellow, red, white and orange. Color scheme represents the six rays of light that came from the body of Buddha when he attained Enlightenment.

The colors themselves are representative of certain Buddhist values. Blue is for loving kindness, yellow is for the middle path, red is for blessings of the practice, white is for the purity of Dhamma, orange is for the wisdom of Buddha's teaching. The combination of rectangular bands of all five colors is for the universal truth of the Buddhist teaching.

Therefore the overall flag represents that regardless of race, nationality and skin color, all sentient beings possess the potential of Buddhahood. Buddhist flag is flown all around the world.

-Sandali Prematillake

The Effects Of Meditation On A Stressed Mind

Meditation is a new trend that has been blown up by many industries. As a result of being Buddhist, most of us have been fortunate enough to have already learned some types of meditation at a young age. Meditation is to think deeply or focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes or as a method of relaxation. Many people that meditate have clearer minds, are happier, and have a better attitude about things they have to do even if they don't want to do them.

Concept of meditation was thought to originate in India, and Taoist areas of China. At the Dhamma school here in Grafton, we have learned about Loving kindness Meditation (Maithri Bhavana), and Breathing Meditation (Sathi Bavana).

Stress is a major problem for people, and under stress we may feel tense, nervous, or on edge. According to the **American Psychological Association**, 47% of Americans are concerned with the amount of stress they have, or have built up inside them. By meditating we free our mind, and let go of everything dragging our mind and us down. If we all meditate for 10 minutes a day, it would help with relaxation, exercise tolerance, and blood pressure along with other health problems. We all have the power to meditate, and we should do so at do so at our

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pleasure. There's no set time to which you have to meditate, and you can even do walking meditation if you want.

As the Buddha once said, "The mind is everything. What you think you become", and using meditation we get one step closer to that goal of becoming better people with better minds.

-Adheesh Perera

Dana

Dana is a *Pali* word translated as giving, generosity and charity. Buddhists should develop a good spirit of *Dana*. It is the first step towards getting rid of greed and hatred. For every act of giving is an act of non-greed and non-hatred. When you give, you are full of loving kindness (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*) in your heart. Greed and hatred has no place at the time of *Dana*.



Dana is giving of useful things to help another being. It could be for Sanga, a lay person, an animal or even for the whole world. Giving could be a thing (material) or your time and energy (immaterial) or even simply supportive attitude and kindness.

In school the teachers give you knowledge *Dana*. In the temple, monks give the *Dhamma Dana*. When we give time and money to build our temple that *Dana* helps the whole Community. It doesn't matter how much you give as you give according to your ability and it is given with a helping mind. *Dana* should be given with a happy heart instead of expecting something in return. That gives the best result in *Danna*.

Dana is a good practice that is part of all religions. In Buddhist teaching, *Dana* is the foundation of all *Paramis*. The more you give the more you cultivate the values like kindness, compassion and happiness. If everyone is in this world cultivates good practice of *Dana*, we will have a wonderful world filled with compassion and happiness.

-Methuru Bandara

Meditation for Daily Life

Meditation is when a person attempts to have extended periods of thoughts or concentration. The *Pali* word for meditation is "*Bhavana*" which means 'to make grow' or 'to develop'. Meditation can benefit your health in many ways. It can reduce your stress, lower blood pressure, increase your attention span. Meditation is now accepted as having highly therapeutic effect upon the mind. It is used by many professional mental health workers to help induce relaxation. >>

It is good to do meditation 15 minutes every day for a week and then extend the time by 5 minutes each week until you are meditating for 45 minutes at a stretch. Buddhist meditation refers to practices associated with the Buddhist religion. It encourages concentration, clarity, emotional positivity, and a calm seeing of the true nature of things.

The Buddhist way of meditating must involve the body and the mind as a single entity. Buddhists believe that meditation is an important part of the path to enlightenment and the ultimate spiritual goal "Nirvana".

- Nigel Karunarathna

Prince Siddhartha

Prince Siddhartha lived 29 years full of luxurious life inside the Royal Palace. After he heard stories of life beyond the palace, he wanted to explore them. He got his father's permission to visit the capital city of his kingdom. The king agreed, but ordered his subjects to hide away any one who is ill and old, and to decorate their houses in festival colors. King did not want any sights disturbing his son.

When the prince entered the city of Kapilawastu, the streets were filled with joy and celebration. The cheerful citizens, all of them healthy and young showered the prince with praise. For a moment, prince Siddhartha was pleased.



Among the crowd, stood an elderly man, saddened and bent with age. In all these years, the prince did not know that people grow old. This knowledge stunned him. Upon returning to the palace, he sat alone in deep observation.

The prince made a return journey to the city and the streets were lined with happy faces again. However among the citizens was a sick man, frail and distressed with bouts of cough. In all his palace years, sickness was unknown to prince Siddhartha. He learned of disease for the first time in his life. He learned that anyone could fall ill at any time.

However, it was the prince's third trip to the city that affected him most. He saw a group of mourners carrying a coffin. Inside the coffin, he saw a dead man wrapped in white. He learned of death and the rights of cremation. >>

He was overwhelmed with the thought that even his beloved family members would someday die. He became very depressed and spent his time alone. His father had no way to cheer his son. Siddhartha wondered how people could live happily knowing that old age, sickness and death awaited them. His gloom deepened, until one day he rode out again on his chariot. This time he traveled to the countryside. There he saw a monk meditating under a tree. He learned that this lonely person had exchanged all pleasures in search of truth. The prince was deeply moved by his new insight.

That night prince Siddhartha would abandon his life of luxury in search of truth. He tendered a silent farewell to his wife and newborn son and embarked on his final journey towards liberation. He ordained himself as a monk near the River Anoma and became a man of solitude searching for wisdom.

-Samadhi Indrarathne

Loving_Kindness

Loving-kindness (*metta*) is one of the most important key concepts in Buddhism. It helps you get of the negative thoughts and allows you to create positive thoughts in your mind.



Loving-kindness is different from love because you expect something in return when you are in love. Love changes over time when the other person changes. Loving-kindness is unconditional and it does not depend on the person in the receiving end.

Practice of loving-kindness begins with you wishing yourself to be free from suffering and harm. Then we start spreading the kindness to people close to us like our parents, relatives, and friends. Then we spread the loving kindness to enemies, strangers, and all living beings regardless of whether we know them or not. This is practiced as a meditation (*metta bhavana*).

When practicing loving-kindness, we do not to engage in harmful thoughts or actions. We experience patience, courage, determination, understanding and acceptance of everybody. Loving-kindness creates peace in one's own-self and peace and unity in the world. If everyone in the world practices Loving-kindness, the world will be a much better place for everybody. There will be no wars, no hate crimes, and there will be no need for walls or barriers around us.

-Dinithi Wijerathna

Vesak Festival

Vesak Poya is the most important and auspicious day for Buddhists all around the world. The birth of Buddha as Prince Siddhartha, his enlightenment and the great passing away happened on *Vesak Poya* day.



Vesak falls on the full moon day in the month of May. Lord Buddha has taught that Buddhist's should follow *dana* (Practice of cultivating generosity), *sila* (moral conduct) and *bhavana* (meditation). We practice these acts at our Dhamma School during every Vesak festival. We observe eight precepts and listen to Dhamma stories and discussions. We also participate in meditation and Buddha pooja.

The devotes of the temple serve *dana* for the venerable monks and everyone who observe *sil*. There we practice generosity.

At night, we decorate the temple with light bulbs, hang Vesak lanterns and hoist Buddhist flags. As Dhamma School children I think the best way to celebrate *Vesak* festival is by showing our respect to the memory of lord Buddha and follow his teachings.

-Jagani Theekshana

Compassion

When a mother sees her children in pain she wishes that her children would be free of that pain. That compassionate wish is part of the foundation of Buddhism. So what exactly is compassion? Compassion is a feeling that is motivated by cherishing other living beings and wishes to release them from their suffering.

Sometimes though we wish others to be out of their suffering out of selfishness. An example of this is when a friend becomes sick and you want him to get well so that you can have his/her company. This is not true compassion because true compassion is based on selflessness and cherishing others.

Although most of us have some degree of compassion, it is usually judgmental. When our family and friends are suffering we easily develop compassion for them. But it is hard to develop sympathy for people we don't like or who are strangers to us. This shows that if you don't feel compassion unconditionally, then it may not be true compassion explained in Buddhism.

-Madhawa Wijerathna



Katina Procession



Vesak Celebration



Harvard University Retreat



Avurudu Celebration



Meditation Program

Photo Trail Of 2017



Independence Day Celebration



Children's Program