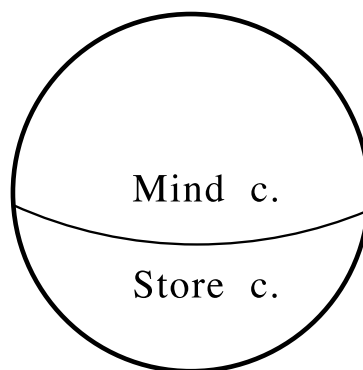


From a Lecture by Thich Nhat Hahn, October 22nd, 1993

(lightly edited)

First Thay gave this diagram to illustrate the principles of Buddhist psychology:



Store consciousness is sometimes called the consciousness of all the seeds, because in Buddhist psychology we used to speak of consciousness in terms of seeds, bijas. And many of the seeds in our consciousness have been transmitted to us by our ancestors.

The times when we were conceived, in the womb of our mother, although we were very tiny, but in that tiny thing, all the seeds, transmitted by several generations of ancestors were in there. There are many seeds that will not be manifested even during our lifetime. They wait until the life of our children and grandchildren to manifest, because in our lifetime, conditions are not sufficient for these to manifest. And according to the teaching, all these have the nature of individual and collective. Everything, every seed has the double nature, individual and collective.

The seed of violence, for instance, it bears the marks of our individual, but it also bears the marks of our society, collective consciousness. Sometimes the individual nature is stronger than the collective, sometimes the collective nature is more important than the individual aspect. It depends on the seed.

Our idea of beauty is also a seed. And the collective thinking of what is beautiful, of what is not beautiful, plays a very important role in that seed. Sometimes we think of it as beautiful because society thinks that it is beautiful. That is the collective nature of the seed.

There are seeds that were planted during the time that we were in our mother's womb. And there are seeds that were planted and watered during our childhood, in school, in society, and that is why store consciousness is sometimes called by the name, 'the consciousness of all the seeds', 'sarva sattva-bijaha'. 'Sarva' means 'all', 'bija' means 'seeds'.

If our mother and father were happy with each other, if they knew how to make each other happy, then even when we were in our mother's womb, we have begun to receive the seeds of happiness from our parents. If you really care for your child, you have to practice being mindful even when your child is not born yet. Everything we do, everything we say to each other will have an effect on the fetus. We continue to plant seeds, and to water the seeds that are already there, transmitted by our ancestors.

If our parents were not happy with each other, if they did not know the art of mindful living and taking care of each other, many seeds of unhappiness are sewn in us, and watered. So when we grow up we have that kind of heritage that is negative, and even if we don't want to do like our parents, we will do like them, because the habit energy has been transmitted. Although we hate our parents, although we want to do the opposite, we will do like them. That is the vicious circle, that is samsara.

Without the practice, we cannot cut through. Only the practice of mindfulness helps us to recognize the habit energy transmitted to us. Only the energy of mindfulness helps us to transform and stop the wheel of samsara. Mindfulness is to recognize things as they are, first. And if you intervene by looking deeply, by training yourself, you'll be able to stop and to transform.

When the child grows up, carrying all these seeds of suffering, he will make the person he loves suffer, he will make his children suffer, naturally. That is only a repetition. And that is why I would like to suggest to you that some of us found an institution for young people, the people who arrive at the age to get married, to found a family, to spend a year in the institution to learn the practice of mindfulness, in order to look deeply into themselves and identify the seeds in themselves, and practice transforming these seeds.

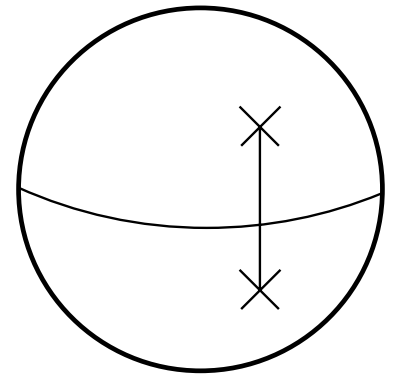
To learn the positive habit energies, to transform the old, negative habit energies, that is for the happiness of the person they love. That will be for the happiness and safety for the children they will bring into life.

We used to spend seven years, ten years to get a diploma, but we do not give enough time to prepare for our happiness, our safety, the happiness and safety of the person we love and of the children we bring into life. So maybe one year is the maximum? And during that year they will learn about themselves, the existence of the seeds, positive and negative, in them, and learn how to water the good seeds, how to prevent watering the negative seeds, how to transform, how to help water the good seeds in the person that they love, how to take care of the children, and not plant in them seeds of unhappiness when they are a child. And these things are very important, We need experienced practitioners to teach and to lead the practice in that institute.

Yesterday I talked about how to handle our anger, and I also said that the way we handle the other afflictions, like despair, like anxiety, like fear, would be the same. I would like to continue a little bit because this is quite important.

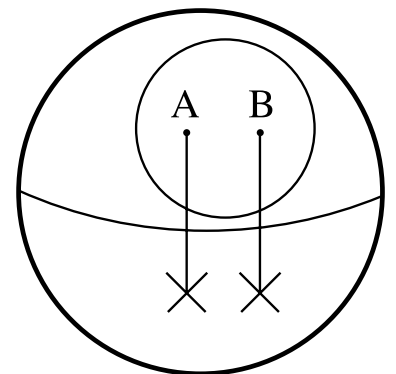
When anger, the seed of anger is watered it will manifest up here, and if we leave the energy of anger alone in our mind consciousness it will bring harm to us.

Especially, the presence of anger here will strengthen the seed of anger down here in store consciousness. Anything that has the chance to manifest here in mind consciousness will be strengthened at the base.



But that does not mean that we have to prevent our anger from coming up, because when we suppress like that we create a situation of bad circulation of our psyche, that will itself result in sickness, physical and mental. So we have to allow them to come up, but we have to learn the way to take care of them, and the best way is to touch the seed of mindfulness, invite it up, and use the energy of mindfulness to embrace the energy of anger.

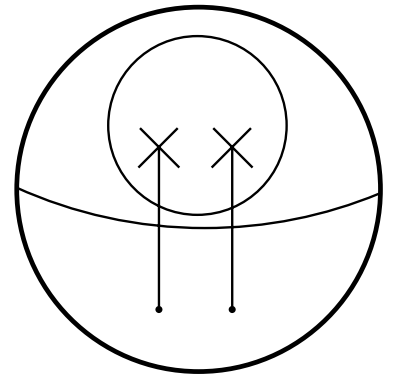
The 'energy A' is embraced by the 'energy b'. If your seed of mindfulness is strong, that is because you have practiced mindful living everyday. And alone, sitting in your living room, or driving the car, you have enough energy of mindfulness to embrace your sorrow, your anger, and you'll be able to transform it, by yourself alone.



In case the seed of mindfulness in you is still weak, because you have not practiced enough mindful living, then you will need a sangha in order to help you. A friend who understands you, who supports you, who is a practitioner, may come and help you in difficult moments.

Because she has her amount of mindfulness, she can bring it and join your power of mindfulness in order to take good care of your affliction, You may have two friends sitting with you, breathing, and they show support.

And the support should be concrete, they should be mindful, and their energy of mindfulness will join you and you will feel stronger in your mindfulness, in dealing with the block of affliction that is there.



The presence of someone you trust, the presence of a brother or sister in the Dharma who know you and who wants to help you, is very important. Don't think that Buddhist meditation must be practiced alone. It is possible to practice meditation alone, but we always profit from the presence of a sangha.

So sangha building is our practice. We know that there are times when we need one person, two persons, or more. We have to invest in our sangha. 'I know that I need my sangha, therefore I take time, I invest my strength.' That is for my support. I need my sangha, I need a friend, two friends, in my difficult moments. And since you need the same, I'll be available every time you need me.

Therefore, in our practice, sangha building, taking refuge in the sangha is very crucial, very important. Try your best to set up a sangha where you are. If you have one, two friends who believe in the practice because they have tasted the fruit of the practice, and then you are protected, you are better protected. They will be available to you in difficult times. And you will be available to them in their difficult times. I beg you to remember this. It is very important.

The most natural and easiest way is to be in a sangha and begin our practice by touching the positive things, the healing things, the refreshing things. Make the practice pleasant. That is what I beg you to do. Use your intelligence, use your creative mind, use your talent in order to create the kind of practice that is pleasant, nourishing, for your children, for yourself, and for your friends. When it is pleasant, you profit from it right away.

Suppose I give a Dharma talk that is not interesting. You do your best in order to concentrate, but you cannot concentrate. You cannot concentrate because the Dharma talk is not interesting. But if the Dharma talk is interesting, you don't need to make any effort, and you become very concentrated.

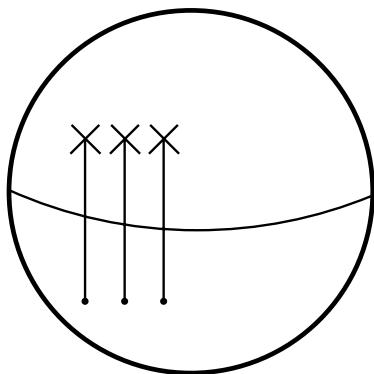
When the practice is pleasant, you don't need much effort. We have to remember that. That is why we should use our talent, our imagination, our

skillfulness in order to make the practice joyful and pleasant, and then people will not have to make a lot of effort. They just participate and they get the seeds of joy, of peace, of stability watered like that. And transformation can take place.

Even if the affliction, the pain is intense, you don't worry, because you know that the best way to take care of it is by the energy of mindfulness. So embrace your pain, in mindfulness. Don't try to fight. And if your mindfulness is not strong enough, ask your friend to come and help. If you continue, there will be a transformation.

I said somewhere that all vegetation is sensitive to the sunshine. All mental formations are sensitive to mindfulness. Use the energy of mindfulness and touch your mental formation. Touch your fear, your anger, your despair, your anxiety. And if you continue to do like that, these blocks of afflictions will weaken, will be transformed.

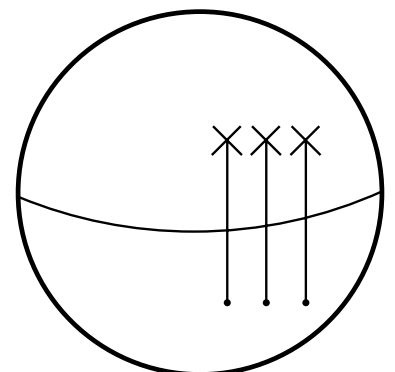
There are those of us who have many important blocks of sufferings in our store consciousness. And we know that it is unpleasant everytime they make their way up into the



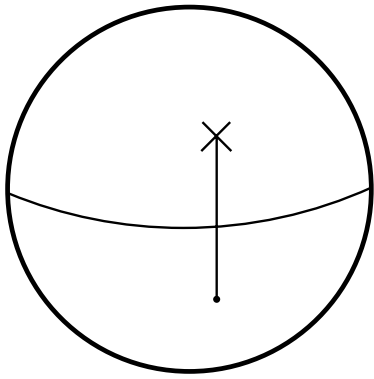
living room. We know that the war is somewhere down there, and we don't want to touch the war in us, to touch the pain in us, and many of us seek a way to escape.

We know very well that if these blocks of pain emerge, we will suffer, that is why we practice invading our living room with other kinds of guests. Because

when you have someone sitting in the living room, then there will be no place for these blocks to come up. And that is why the practice that many of us do is to run away from us, and to take refuge, to forget, in things like books, magazines, television, conversation.

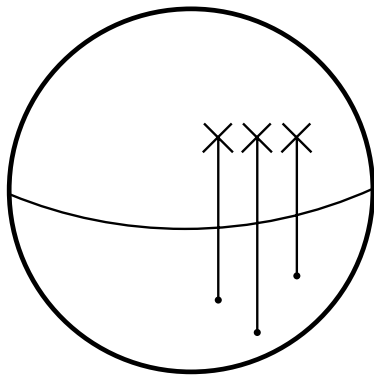


We complain that we do not have time, but whenever we have some time, we do not dare go back to ourselves. We are afraid of touching the pain in us. That is why we always invite a guest to come to sit in the living room.



We turn on television, we pick up a magazine to read, we pick up a telephone to talk to anyone. We want to get busy.

If many people work so hard, it's not because they want to achieve something. It may be that they are trying to take refuge in the work, in order not to encounter themselves. This kind of practice of taking refuge in things outside can bring a lot of damage to us.



The first kind of damage is that this kind of product, these guests that we invite into our living room may contain toxins, and while we entertain them here, the seeds of suffering in us continue to be watered by these toxins.

You feel empty, you are afraid, you turn on television and one hour of television may water the seed of violence, of fear, of uncertainty in us. We are not mindful in our consumption. Society, the market, provides us with all kinds of items to help us to run away from ourselves, to take refuge. And when we consume these things we continue the process of intoxicating ourselves.

Look at our children, at the way they consume. They are exposed to a lot of toxins, poisons. The only way to stop that is mindful living, the practice of the Five Wonderful Precepts.

(Here is Thay's version of the traditional Five Precepts:)

The Five Mindfulness Trainings

The First Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivate compassion and learn 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 condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

The Second Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivate loving kindness and learn ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am committed to practice 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 cultivate responsibility and learn 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.

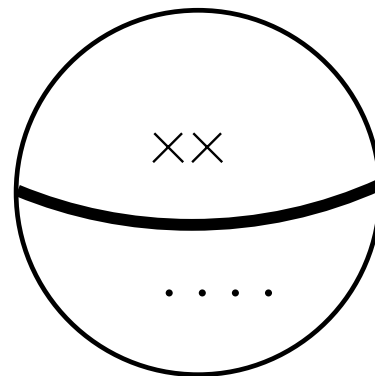
The Fourth Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivate 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 committed to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize 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 will 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 cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I am committed to 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 programs, 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 practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

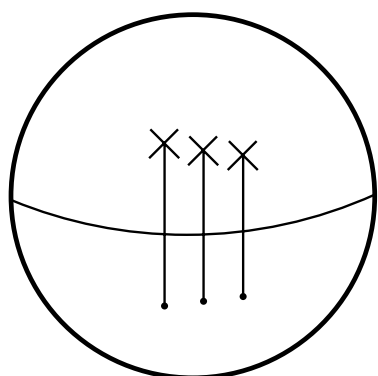
The second damage we do is, by inviting these guests to come and sit in our living room, we try to set up a kind of barrier here, preventing these things from coming up. We keep busy, busy, busy, so that these things do not have a chance to come up.



They will come up during our sleep, but in the daytime, we try to prevent, consciously or unconsciously. By blocking the way of these mental formations, we create the situation of bad circulation.

We know that when the blood does not circulate well in our body, we get sick. We get all kinds of sicknesses. So we do all kinds of things in order to have our blood circulate well, in order not to have a headache, or to have pains in our muscles.

Our psyche is a kind of blood. If they (the elements of our psyche) are blocked they cannot circulate. And if they cannot circulate, symptoms of illness will appear in our body and in our consciousness. Mental illness is the result of that kind of suppression. And we have to go to a doctor, a psychiatrist, and we have to receive medicines. And that is why it is so important not to practice these two things- not to consume things that give us more toxins, and not to block the door of our mental formations. We have to do the opposite.

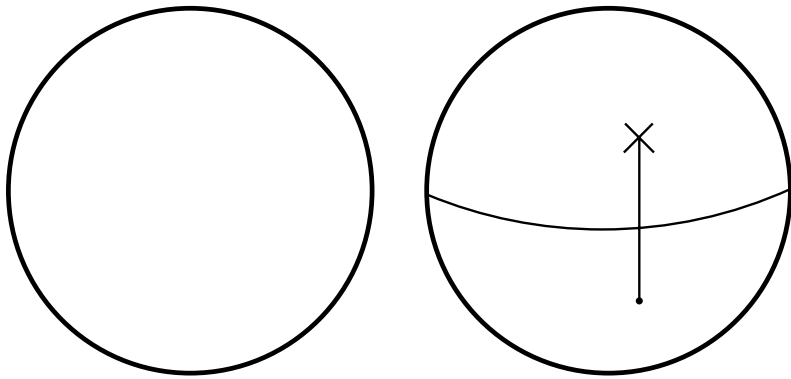


The first step is to practice touching the positive elements, within and outside, for our own nourishment. The second is the practice of the Five Wonderful Precepts, in order to prevent the toxins from getting in.

That is the first step, to counter the usual practice of many people in our society. This is preventative. This is curative, healing, because if you get in touch with the positive, refreshing, and healing elements, you water the positive seeds. You restore the balance, and you will transform the negative things.

Preventative and healing. And the result is that while doing so, while practicing so, the energy of mindfulness will be generated. Your seed of mindfulness will be more important, and every time you want to generate the power of mindfulness, it's so easy, so natural. And when the energy of mindfulness is powerful enough, you will no longer be afraid of letting these things come

up. You know that the best way to handle them is to embrace them, with the energy of mindfulness.

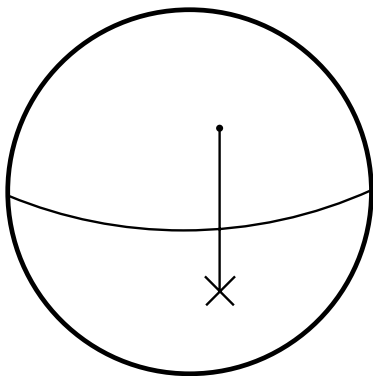


So remove the barrier and let the blocks of pain come, if they want.

When your depression comes up, don't be afraid, smile to it. 'Hello, good morning my little depression. I know you are there.

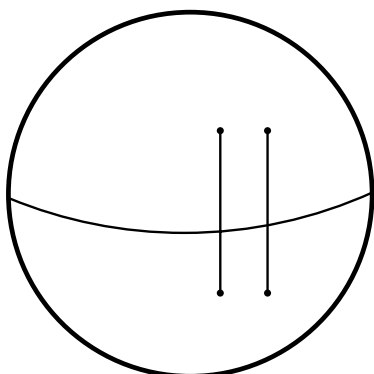
You are a friend of mine. I will take good care of you.' And the energy of mindfulness is generated in order to greet, to embrace.

We allow our depression to be, we do not try to suppress. The same is true with our anger, our despair. 'Good morning, my little anger, I know you are there. I will take good care of you.' And every time we greet our anger, we embrace our anger, and we continue to embrace our anger, the phenomena of discharge will always take place.



And after a few minutes our anger will go down in the form of a seed, and this time a little bit weaker. And if tomorrow it comes up, we do very much the same thing, and we are confident that we can do it because by practicing these two things we have cultivated the energy of mindfulness.

We do not invite them. We may invite them when our power of mindfulness is very strong, but we are not afraid every time they come up.



Having removed the barrier, our mental formations, our blocks of pain, are free to come up and to go down. And every time they encounter the energy of mindfulness, they get a little bit of transformation, and they go down again, and you create a situation of good circulation of your psyche. And symptoms of illness will vanish.

That is the way of the practice taught by the Buddha.

In the Buddhist temple, monks and nuns used to practice inviting their fears up, and looking at them. The Five Remembrances, for instance.

Breathing in and out, you practice like this: 'I am of the nature to grow old. I cannot escape old age', and you smile to your fear of old age.

'I am of the nature to get sick. I cannot escape sickness.'

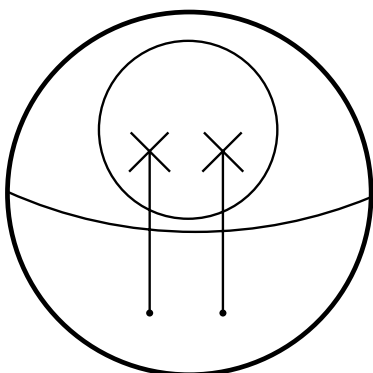
'I am of the nature to die. I cannot avoid dying.'

'Everything I have, everything I cherish today, I will have to abandon one day.'

'I am the product of my actions, my karma. Only the fruits of my actions follow me.'

These are the Five Remembrances that monks and nuns have to practice everyday, inviting them up, acknowledging them, and letting them go down again. So that is very much allowing circulation. And if, having practiced that, you practice touching the ultimate dimension, you will get the greatest kind of relief.

In psychotherapy, there are people who tell us that we should allow, we should touch our anger, we should live our anger. It is true of course that we should not suppress our anger, but how to live our anger?, how to touch our anger?-that remains the question.



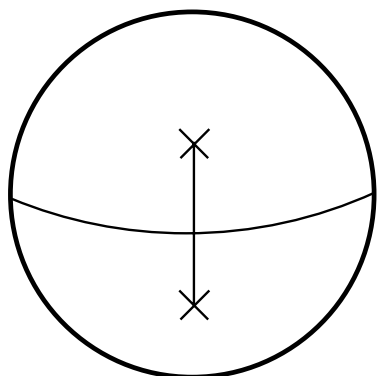
In the Buddhist teaching it is clear that the energy of mindfulness makes itself available. Mindfulness acknowledges the presence of anger. Do not suppress it. The energy of mindfulness embraces anger. So it is clear that the agent that does the work of touching and living anger is mindfulness.

Without mindfulness, touching anger may be dangerous. Living your anger may be dangerous.

There are therapists who advise you in times of anger to go into your room and lock your room, and use all your might to beat the cushion. You hit the

cushion for half an hour, and you get a relief.

Of course, after one hour of ‘pillow pounding’ you get exhausted, and you feel relief, but the roots of anger remain intact- not to say it has been strengthened, because



during the time you hit the pillow, you are practicing your anger, you are allowing your anger to grow stronger as a seed, because you have nothing here in order to help anger to be transformed.

It is dangerous to hit the pillow half an hour, entertaining anger here, maybe very destructive, because according to the teaching, the seed of anger here will become more important. It is not really touching your anger, because when you touch anger you should know that it is anger. In the practice of pounding the pillow, you don't even touch the pillow. If you really touch the pillow, you would know that it is only a pillow, and you would not hit a pillow like that. So you are not touching either the pillow or your anger, you just practice anger, and help it to grow.

Some of the people who have been advising their clients to practice pillow pounding have reported to me that they have stopped asking their clients to practice that, because some of them have practically hit other people, and gone to jail, because they had the habit of pounding at the pillow.

We need to finish the Lotus Sutra...