



Mid America Dharma News

Offering Insight Meditation to the Heartland

Those First Precious Moments of a Meditation Session

By Shaila Catherine

How do you settle yourself to begin your meditation practice? How do you establish mindful attention at the beginning of your daily meditation session?

Some people dive in upon their meditation object (such as the breath) so quickly and forcefully that they agitate the mind, control

[Continued on page 2]

Kindhearted Awareness: Cultivating an Attitude of Yes

By Rebecca Bradshaw

Kindhearted awareness is what makes it possible for us to relax. Many of us come to practice, however, with a tendency to want to fix ourselves, or to “fix” experience, rather than with a sense of kindness toward ourselves.

If we have this covert agenda of aggressiveness towards ourselves, towards our experience of life, this will color our ability to trust silence, stillness, and presence. The world will look hostile to us, not inviting. As we cultivate an ability to infuse awareness with kindheartedness, or we could say, to bring the natural kindhearted

[Continued on page 2]

In this issue

1 | **Teacher Writings**

4 | **Upcoming Retreats**

7 | **Retreat Registration**

Did you know we offer 2 ways to register for our retreats?

By Mail

- Complete and mail-in the registration form on p7

Online

- Visit midamericadharma.org
- Click the link *Mid America Dharma Retreats*
- Register for your preferred retreat by clicking *On-line Registration*



Like Us on Facebook!

Log into your Facebook account and type

Mid America Dharma in the search bar.

We post up-to-date retreat and community info on our page. Feel free to comment or message us anytime. We love to hear from you!

*[Continued from page 1, **First Moments of Meditation**]*

their experience, and pressure themselves to accomplish too much. Other people don't bother to establish a clear intention toward mindful awareness, and sit down relaxing into a period of daydreams. These may describe extremes, but notice how you begin your meditation session, and consider ways that

“...consider ways to diligently yet gently establish mindfulness as a priority.”

you might approach those initial precious minutes to diligently yet gently establish mindfulness as a priority.

You might explore the possibility of starting with a reflection, chant, or dhamma verse; articulating your intention; settling the mind in the body with body scan techniques, metta, postural awareness, a practice of your choice that develops tranquility, or just deciding that you want to be present. Experiment with various approaches to discover how you might begin your daily practice establishing mindfulness as the priority.

Then practice bringing mindful awareness into your daily activities by noticing how you approach various work, family and daily life events. Try entering those situations by making mindfulness a priority and see how the intention toward mindfulness affects the quality of your engagement. ❖

By Shaila Catherine. Excerpted from a post in her blog for Insight Meditation South Bay <http://blog.imsb.org/?p=575>

*[Continued from page 1, **Kindhearted Awareness**]*

quality of awareness to the forefront, we find that this world looks friendlier, more inviting, and a safer place to be. We strengthen a foundation of acceptance which gives the heart and mind a greater capacity to relax and meet all of life, as it is.

With kindhearted awareness, we cultivate an attitude of “Yes, you too.” For example, when fear arises, when we can meet it with kindness, it softens the edges of aversion towards the experience of fear itself, and allows us to relax into fear and see it clearly. When physical pain arises and we can approach it with kindness, we can connect more fully with life in this moment. When craving arises, rather than seeing it as bad, we can turn towards it with care, lessening its power to overwhelm us.

The relaxation encouraged by kindhearted awareness opens us to the deeper truths of existence. Expectation, agendas, and striving necessarily of

“Kindhearted awareness deepens our connection with life as it is.”

themselves distort our perception of reality. These manifestations of grasping cloud the mind and unconsciously cause us to see life through distorted filters and unseen assumptions. The relaxation engendered by kindheartedness means fewer, or clearer, filters and a clearer connection with reality. This results in a greater capacity to meet experience as it is: impermanent, not able to provide lasting fulfillment and not-self. In this way, kindhearted awareness deepens our connection with life as it is, dissolving confusion and leading to freedom of heart and mind. ❖

By Rebecca Bradshaw. Originally printed in Twin Cities VIP Collective Newsletter 2013

The Nature of Spiritual Practice

By Robert Brumet

Spiritual practice has both active and passive elements. The passive element is to deliberately refrain from activities that substantiate and reinforce an egocentric identity. We practice by *not* doing that which is familiar and habitual.

For example, we may sit quietly and do nothing but pay attention to the breath. Sooner or later we will notice uncomfortable physical sensations, distracting thoughts and desires arising, and many stories beckoning us to indulge in them. The practice then is to simply notice this without reacting and then return to the breath. We do not indulge the ego's demand for our attention. This is the practice of "not doing."

The active element of spiritual practice is to intentionally engage in activities that disrupt the habituated patterns of the ego-centric identity. For example, we may engage in a practice of generosity which will bring to the surface the egocentric tendencies of craving or possessiveness; it may uncover our fear of lack or limitation. We then look directly at these beliefs and their resultant emotions. We are then able to make the conscious choice to believe them no more as we continue our practice of generosity.

Ego-identification feeds upon attention for its survival. As we engage a spiritual practice that refuses to feed this habituated pattern the egoic tendencies will gradually disappear, but first they will assert themselves with vigor! But rather than act upon or suppress this impulse, as we might habitually do, we allow the impulse to arise, we notice it, and we simply return to our practice. We make a conscious choice to neither reject nor act

upon the impulses that arise.

Eventually these impulses will diminish; but not without a great deal of protesting! This is why strong intention and commitment to practice is vital. The ego-identity will demand that we feed it with our attention and our agreement with its beliefs and its stories. Spiritual practice is intentionally interrupting our habituated tendency to do this.

For example, the ego-self may have a strong propensity for planning and always anticipating future events. A spiritual practice such as meditation will persistently call us back to our present moment experience, interrupting the mind's tendency toward futurizing. Returning to the present moment we may see that this compulsive planning is a smokescreen for some underlying pain that's calling for our attention. The healing of this will occur only

by accepting it in the present moment.

With spiritual practice we are

not trying to attain a particular experience or to reach a desired goal. We are not trying to feel a certain way, nor are we trying solve any personal problems. Our primary intention is to simply engage the chosen practice without any attachment to a specific outcome.

As a result of practice we may have some euphoric experiences or gain some profound insights, but we see this simply as a by-product of our practice, not the primary goal. Conversely, we may have some unpleasant or difficult experiences along the way. It is very important not to become discouraged by these. This is where a teacher or a support group can be of help to us. ❖

By Robert Brumet. Excerpted from his book, "Living Originally: Ten Spiritual Practices to Transform Your Life."

“We practice by *not* doing that which is familiar and habitual.”

Mid America Dharma Retreats

Joe McCormack & Tonda March ❖ November 9–10, 2013*Columbia College, Columbia, MO – Non-residential**Fee Range: \$60 - \$90**Registration opens August 9 and closes October 26*

Joe McCormack has practiced insight meditation since 1995. He has been a member of the Show Me Dharma Teachers Council since 2002. Joe leads an insight meditation group in Jefferson City, and has taught insight meditation to prison inmates since 1998. His teachers include Ginny Morgan, Phil Jones, and Matthew Flickstein. In January 2008, he completed the Community Dharma Leader training program through Spirit Rock Meditation Center. In his dharma instruction, Joe draws from traditional Theravada Buddhist teachings, Zen and Dzogchen practice, Advaita teachings, and the Diamond Approach. He is also trained as a psychologist and practices psychotherapy in Jefferson City.



Tonda March has been practicing meditation since the early nineties. She has been influenced by the wisdom of several Western Theravadan teachers, including Ginny Morgan, Carol Wilson, Gregory Kramer, and Thanissara. Month-long self-retreats at Forest Refuge and participation in Spirit Rock's Community Dharma Leaders training program have helped her practice unfold.

**Robert Brumet ❖ December 27–30, 2013 (4-day option)
December 27–January 1, 2014 (6 days)**
*Conception Abbey, Conception, MO (near Kansas City, MO) – Residential**Fee Range: \$250-\$375 (4-day option) or \$370-\$550 (6-day option)**Registration opens October 27, 2013*

Robert Brumet has practiced Insight Meditation since 1988. He has been leading a local sangha and conducting meditation retreats throughout North America since 1995. In the early 1990s he received vipassana facilitator training from Shinzen Young. In January 2000 he graduated from the Community Dharma Leader training program, sponsored by Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Robert is one of the founding members of Mid-America Dharma. He lives in Kansas City and teaches at Unity Institute and Seminary near Lee's Summit MO.

Mid America Dharma Retreats

Shaila Catherine & Philip Jones

❖ **February 13–17, 2014 (5-day option)**
February 13–23, 2014 (11 days)

Sanctuary of Hope, Kansas City, KS (near Kansas City, MO) – Residential
Fee Range: \$1000-\$1500 (11-day) or \$450-\$675 (5-day option)
Registration opens December 13, 2013



Shaila Catherine has been practicing meditation since 1980, with more than eight years of accumulated silent retreat experience. She has taught since 1996 in the USA and internationally. Shaila has dedicated several years to studying with masters in India, Nepal and Thailand, completed a one year intensive meditation retreat with the focus on concentration and jhana, and authored *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity* (Wisdom Publications, 2008). She has extensive experience with the practice of metta, including seven months exploring metta as the meditation subject in retreats. In recent years, Shaila had continued her study of jhana and insight with the guidance of Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw of Burma.



Philip Jones has practiced meditation since 1987 and has been teaching Insight Meditation since 1996. He has studied with teachers from Spirit Rock and the Insight Meditation Society and graduated from the first Community Dharma Leader program in 2000. He also studied for a number of years with Matthew Flickstein and more recently has been practicing with teachers from IMS. He has served on the board of directors of Mid America Dharma, the regional retreat organization, since the mid-'90's. Many of his talks and writings can be found at <http://silentmindopenheart.org>.

Mid America Dharma Retreats

Bridget Rolens & Jon Yaffe ❖ *March 21–23, 2014*

Maria Center, St. Louis, MO – Non-residential

Fee Range: \$60-\$90

Registration opens January 21, 2014



Bridget Rolens has practiced Insight Meditation since 1997. Her mentors include Matthew Flickstein, Ginny Morgan and Gloria “Taraniya” Ambrosia. In June 2013 she completed the Integrated Study and Practice Program at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies. Recognized by the Spirit Rock Teachers Council as a Community Dharma Leader Bridget co-leads the St. Louis Insight Meditation Group, teaches classes and workshops, and leads retreats. Bridget also teaches Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and is the program facilitator for Masterpeace Studios’ Mind-Body Stress Reduction program in Crestwood, MO.



Jon Yaffe began practicing Insight Meditation in 1999 and has been a co-leader of SLIMG since 2006. A student of Matthew Flickstein, he has completed two of his programs: "Teaching as a Form of Practice" and "The Two Year Training". He has served on the Board of Directors of Mid America Dharma since 2005, and currently serves as its President.

Rebecca Bradshaw ❖ *April 24–27, 2014*

Pallottine Renewal Center, St. Louis, MO – Residential

Fee Range: \$420-\$630

Registration opens February 24, 2014



Rebecca Bradshaw is the Guiding Teacher at the Insight Meditation Center of Pioneer Valley in Easthampton, MA. She has been practicing Vipassana meditation since 1983 in the United States and Myanmar (Burma) and teaching since 1993. Rebecca has a master's degree in Counseling Psychology, is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), and works as a psychotherapist with meditators interested in supplementing their meditation practice with psychotherapeutic work. Her teaching explores the convergence of love and wisdom.

Retreat Registration

Insight Meditation offers an easily accessible way to free the mind from the distortions of self-centeredness, negativity and confusion. Through concentrated awareness, we see that our experience is a constantly changing process, in which all aspects of life are accepted with increasing balance and equanimity. This insight leads to the possibility of living each moment fully, with compassion and genuine freedom. Insight Meditation requires no belief commitments and is compatible with religious affiliations. Unless specified, no previous meditation experience is required.

Retreat Format: Periods of sitting meditation and/or dharma teachings alternate with walking meditation. Retreats are held in silence, with talking only during specified teaching periods. Beginners should be present from the start of the retreat to receive initial instructions. Please bring a meditation cushion or bench and a soft floor pad for meditation. Standard chairs are available and may also be used. Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes. Please do not wear or bring strongly scented lotions, perfumes or incense.

Residential retreats begin with check-in at 4 pm on the first day and run through lunch on the last day. Participants are guided through group or private interviews and daily general lectures. Meals are plain vegetarian. A tea table is provided.

Registration: Information about retreat site, starting times, etc., is available online or will be sent after you register.

Fees: Retreat costs are listed under each retreat heading and on the mail-in registration form at the end of this newsletter.

Sliding Scale: Each retreat cost is listed as a range. The lowest fee listed is the base cost of providing the retreat for each retreatant. Any amount paid above that will be a tax-deductible contribution used to defray retreat expenses, scholarships and other activities.

Residential: a minimum deposit of \$75 must accompany registration; full payment is due at the start of the retreat. Non-residential retreats: please pay the full fee when you register.

Registration Opening Dates and Deadlines: ... are listed on the specific retreat pages. Registrations are not accepted prior to the beginning date for each retreat. Registrations received after the deadline are subject to a \$25 late fee.

Refunds: We will refund fees if requested before the deadline.

Scholarships: We do not want inability to pay to prevent you from attending, and have established a scholarship fund to provide assistance where needed. Deferred payment is also available. You can read about and apply for assistance when registering via any of our retreat websites or the registrar can mail you written materials. Applications must be received by the Registrar no later than three weeks prior to the retreat

Dana (or generosity): Our retreats are led by teachers who freely give the teachings without any payment. All retreat fees go for retreat expenses, such as facility rental and meals. It is central to this tradition that students support teachers through their donations. There is no expected amount, but please give to the extent you are able. Dana is completely voluntary.

Retreat registration is available online or via mail. To register online, go to www.midamericadharmadharma.org/retreats.

To register by mail, send this form with a check payable to: **Mid America Dharma, c/o Jon Yaffe, 3222 Walter Ave, Maplewood, MO 63143**. If registering for multiple retreats, please send a separate copy of this form with payment to the registrar for each retreat. A \$75 deposit is required for all residential retreats. Please register as early as you can, as this greatly helps our planning.

_____ *November 9-10, 2013*
Joe McCormack & Tonda March, Non-residential
 Columbia College, Columbia, MO
 Fee range: \$60-\$90
Fee Amount _____

_____ *December 27-30, 2013 (4-day option)*
 _____ *December 27-January 1, 2014 (6-day option)*
Robert Brumet, Residential
 Conception Abby, Conception, MO (near KC)
 Fee range: \$250-376 (4-day) or \$370-\$550 (6-day)
Fee Amount _____

_____ *February 13-17, 2014 (5-day option)*
 _____ *February 13-23, 2014 (11-day option)*
Shaila Catherine, Residential
 Sanctuary of Hope, Kansas City, KS
 Fee range: \$450-\$675 (5-day) or \$1000-\$1500 (11-day)
Fee Amount _____

_____ *March 21-23, 2014*
Bridget Rolens & Jon Yaffe, Non-residential
 Maria Center, St. Louis, MO
 Fee range: \$60-90
Fee Amount _____

_____ *April 24-27, 2014*
Rebecca Bradshaw, Residential
 Pallottine Renewal Center, St. Louis, MO
 Fee range: \$420-\$630
Fee Amount _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

For Residential Retreatants only:

Gender: M F
 Will you arrive after 7pm on the first day? Y N
 Is this your first insight meditation retreat? Y N
 Do you snore? Y N

If you have special needs, please contact the registrar at registrar@midamericadharmadharma.org or (314) 669-6524

A note about retreats with Shinzen Young

We are sad to report we will not be able to offer a retreat with Shinzen Young for the next few years. Due to other commitments he will not be able to lead a MAD retreat until after 2015. If you want more information about Shinzen's schedule, please check <http://www.shinzen.org>.

Mid America Dharma

455 E. 80th Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64131-2120

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Columbia, MO
Permit #286

Address Service Requested

Mid America Dharma Upcoming Retreats

Nov 9-10, 2013 Non-residential Retreat **Joe McCormack & Tonda March**, Columbia College, Columbia, MO

Dec 27-30, 2013

Dec 27-Jan 1, 2014 Residential Retreat **Robert Brumet**, Conception Abbey, Conception, MO

Feb 13-17, 2014

Feb 13-23, 2014 Residential Retreat **Shaila Catherine & Philip Jones**, Sanctuary of Hope, Kansas City, KS

March 21-23, 2014 Non-Residential Retreat **Bridget Rolens & Jon Yaffe**, Maria Center, St. Louis, MO

Apr 24-27, 2014 Residential Retreat **Rebecca Bradshaw**, Pallotine Center, St. Louis, MO

For the latest information on retreats and a full listing of Midwestern Buddhist groups please visit our website:

www.midamericadharm.org