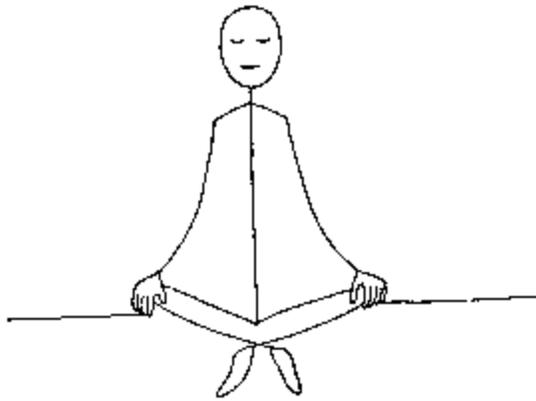

Beginning To See



by Sujata

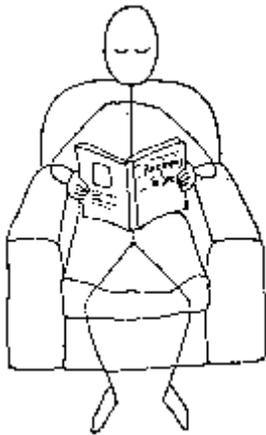
Pen-art by Julio Lynch

A collection of epigrams
about the problem of living
and the freedom to be gained
through meditation

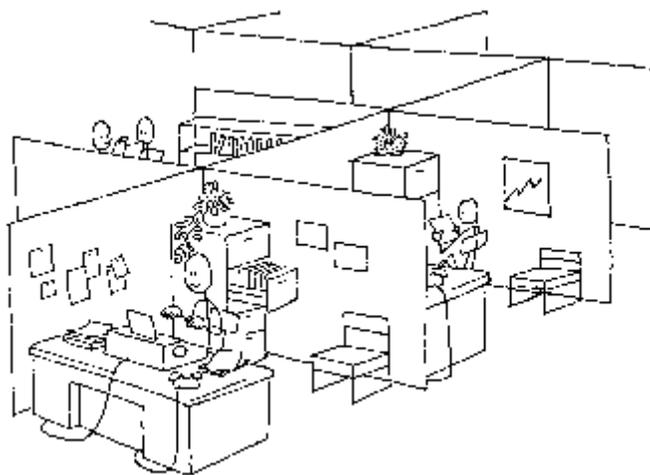
This book is dedicated to
the 9-to-5ers
and everybody else

Text edited by Vipassana Dhura Meditation Society

Much suffering
comes into the
life of one who
tries to be anywhere but
here
in the present
moment



Are you
content
with where you
are right now?

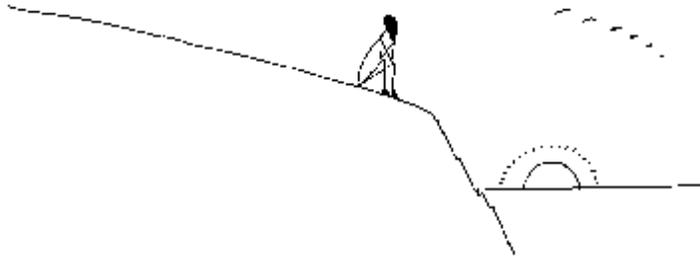


because "right nows" are all you have

There is nothing
in this life that we can
have for very long

things and people
come ...
then leave us ...

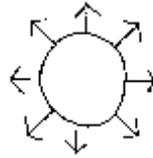
and we are left
sad and aching
because of
our attachment



Because we accept only the pleasure
in our lives

an immense amount
of fear is created
as we spend our lives
dodging pain

The world continually
demands that we
direct our
attention
outside
ourselves



Meditation teaches
us to revolt



And turn that
awareness toward
our neglected,
dimly-lit
insides ...



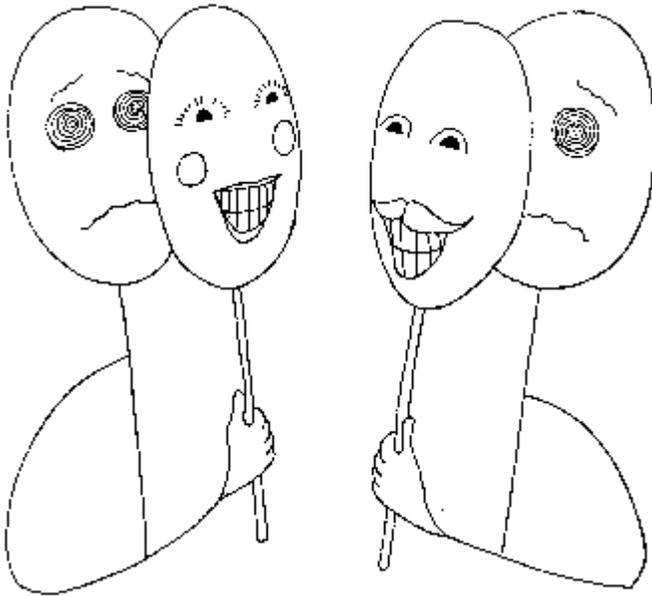
Painful feelings
in the mind (jealousy, envy,
hatred, loneliness,
frustration, depression)
indicate
wrong attitudes
about life

A meditation

retreat can show
us what we're
doing wrong



We live fearfully



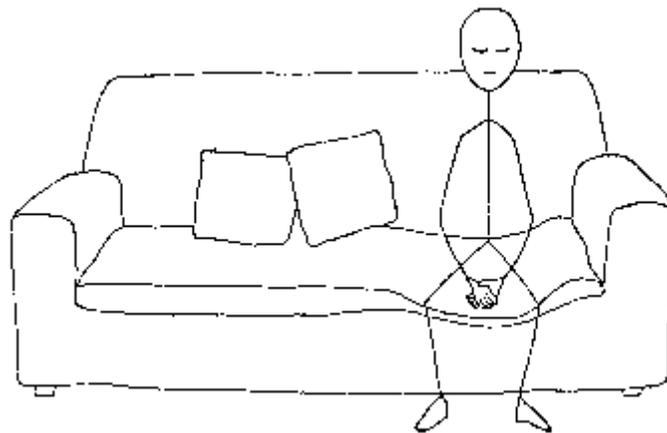
Because we want
Reality to occur in a
Yaw cificeps

We progress in this
life according to our
honest wisdom

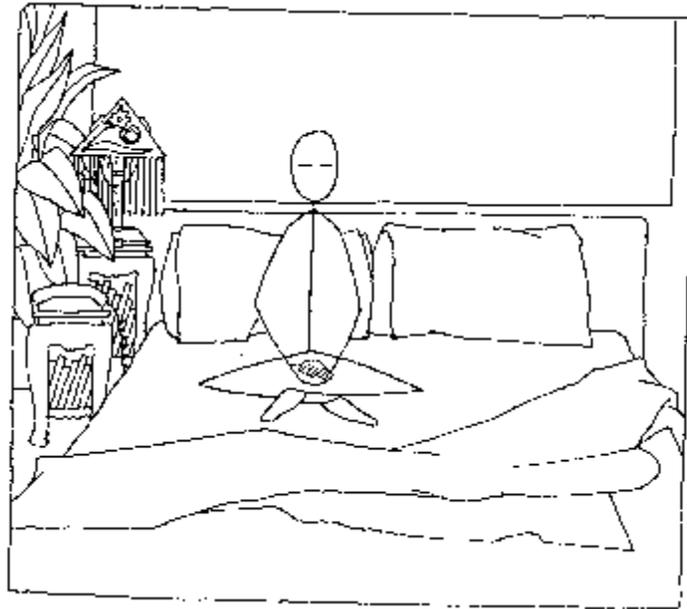
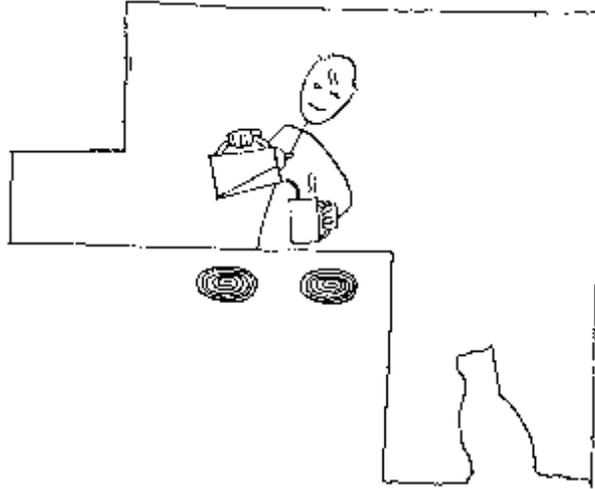
honest wisdom is
realizing what you feel,
knowing what you think,

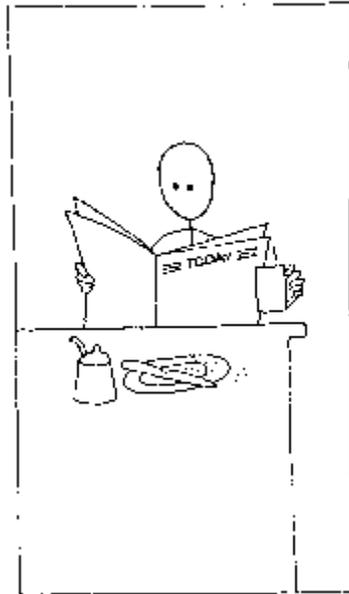
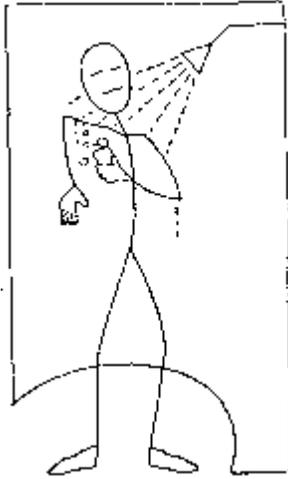
and opening
your attention
to everything
that comes
before you

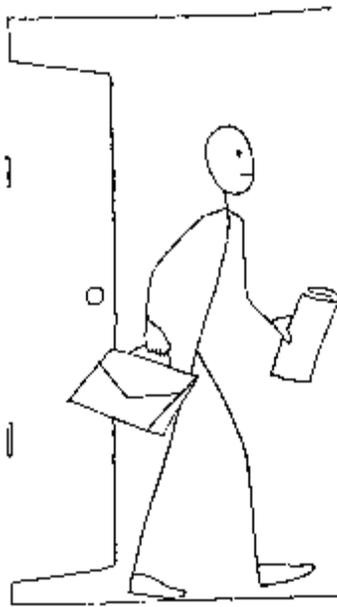
We should take
time each day to
understand
ourselves,
To watch exactly
what we experience
in walking and sitting
meditation



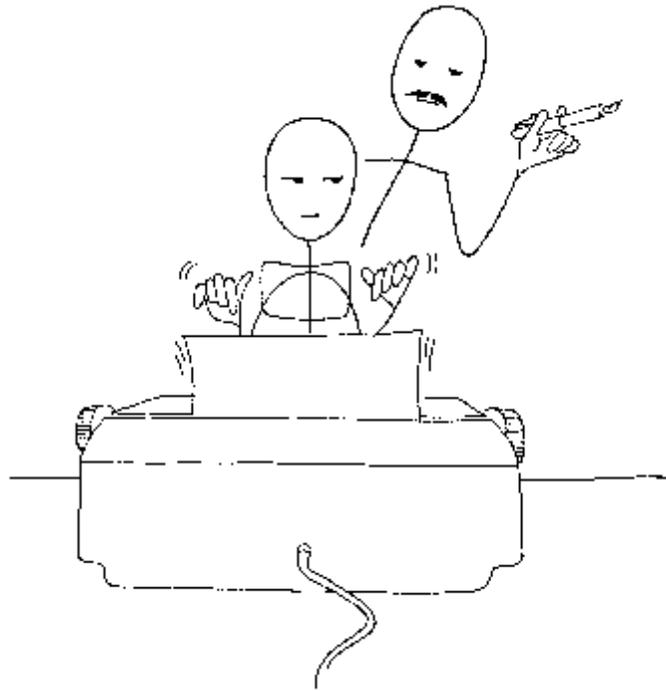
How to
Start a
Good day



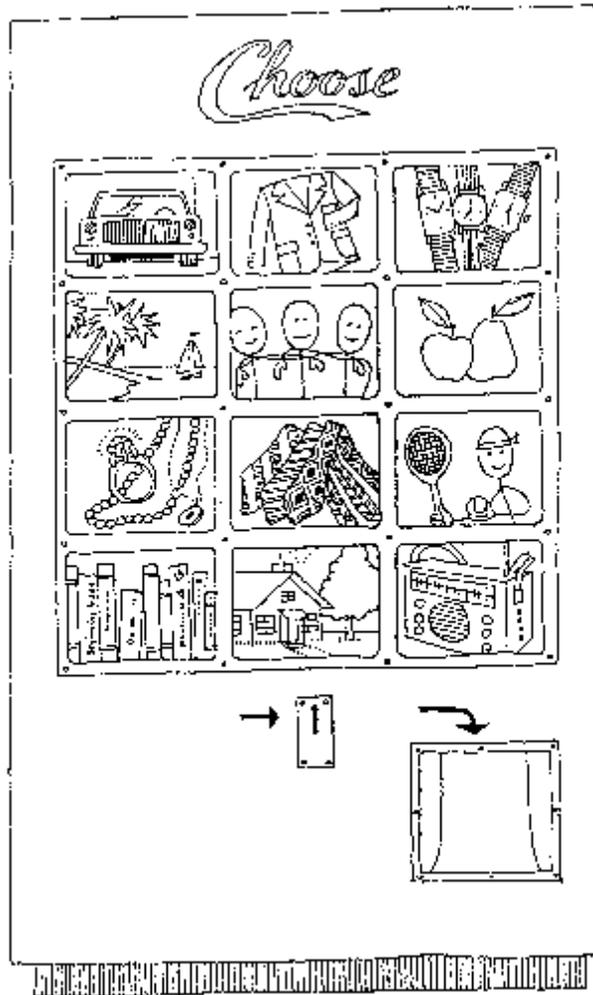




Every day you are
responsible
for how you feel



no one can make you
unhappy
or nervous



Choices in a
 meditator's life are
 very simple:
 he does those
 things that contribute
 to his greater awareness
 and wholesomeness of mind.
 He refrains from
 those that do not

In what direction
 are you taking yourself?
 (Is it worth your effort?
 Is it exactly where

you want
to go?)

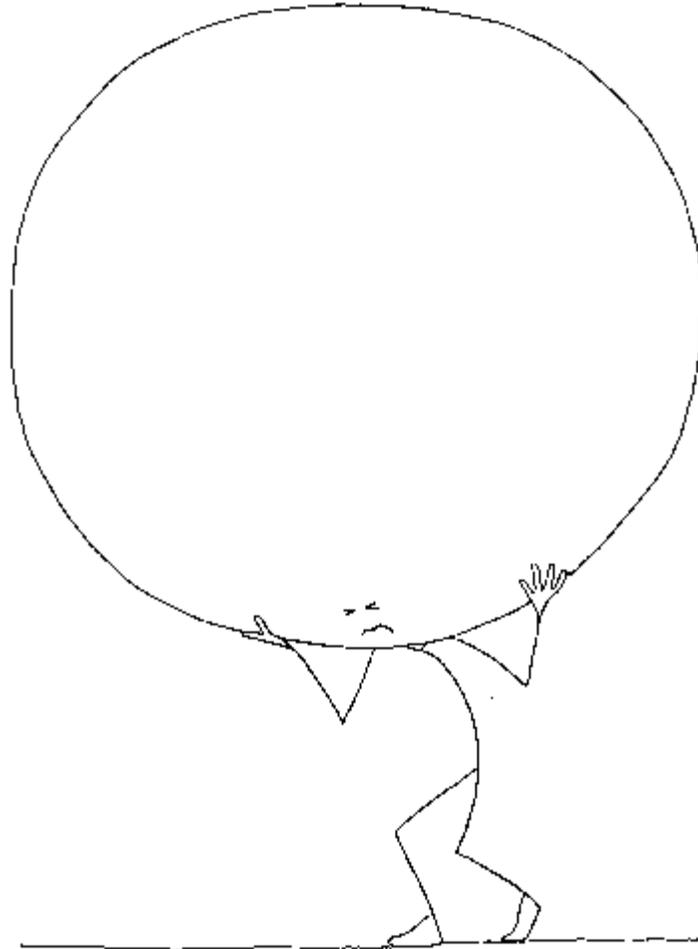


Insight meditation
systematically trains us
to be aware
of everything we're "up to"

Ego
Is but a worrisome product
of unmindful, wandering thoughts

when powerful awareness is cultivated,
we happily learn that there is
no one who thinks,

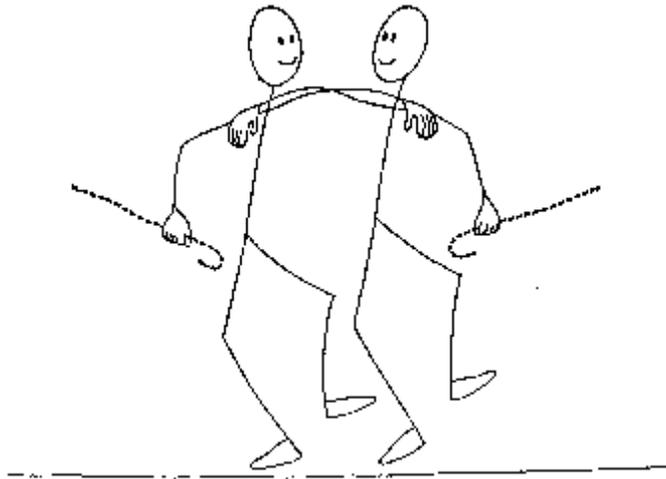
Only thinking...
No one who walks,
Only walking...
No one who sees,
Only seeing...
And finally the great burden
is dissolved



Nonattachment
does not mean
being dead

Rather, it is made up of
mindfulness

clear comprehension
loving kindness
compassion
sympathetic joy
and
equanimity



It is hard
to be compassionate
and loving

but it is
harder
to be
uncompassionate
Because anger hurts
The one who feels angry

Meditation on Loving Kindness

Besides teaching insight meditation, the Buddha also taught a meditation to develop loving kindness toward all creatures. The instructions are to sit in a quiet place and first reflect on the dangers of hatred, anger and resentment, and the benefits of loving kindness. These reflections remind us of the importance of maintaining a loving attitude in all circumstances.

Only when there is love for oneself can there be love for others. So we practice loving kindness and compassion towards ourselves first. Warmth for ourselves grows as we repeat the loving thought: 'May I be free from troubles (anger, fear, tension, anxiety, hatred, etc.). May I be happy.'

When we first begin the practice of loving kindness, we may be surprised to find we have difficulty wishing ourselves well. We may feel guilty or unworthy. There may be self-hatred in our minds, conditioned by years of comparing ourselves to others, or to some ideal we've been clinging to.

Spend some time each day specifically cultivating that warm and open mind which thoughts of loving kindness produce by gently and silently repeating your wish for yourself: 'may I be happy,' or 'may I be free from restlessness,' or 'may I be free from anxiety,' in whatever way feels appropriate to you. After sharing loving kindness and compassion to yourself, spend some time trying to extend this loving kindness to all beings everywhere, without distinction.

If we work ardently at this meditation we will begin to see a healthy change happening within ourselves.

May all beings be happy.

Anger is most
dangerous

it can destroy you,
the person next
to you,
and the place in which
you live.



When aversion arises in
our minds,
we must be aware of it
and try to mindfully
drop it.

Hatred
is harmful
in any of its forms –
resentment, aversion,
jealousy, anger, harshness,
disgust.

If we watch carefully
what it does to our minds
and what we do
to other people
when motivated by hatred,
we have no choice
but to give it up.

We don't want
time on our hands,
because then we might stop
long enough to notice

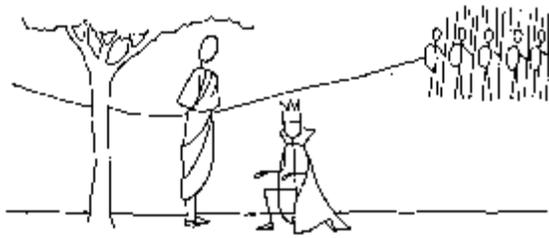
that we are very unhappy
people,
going nowhere
special ...

The Buddha did not
come to reassure us
that the world was
moving in the
right
direction

Once a king who was
marching to war came
near the place where
an enlightened teacher
was living.
The king was in a great hurry
but he wanted to learn
something from the saint.
Respectfully the king approached,
paid homage, and asked the
holy one:

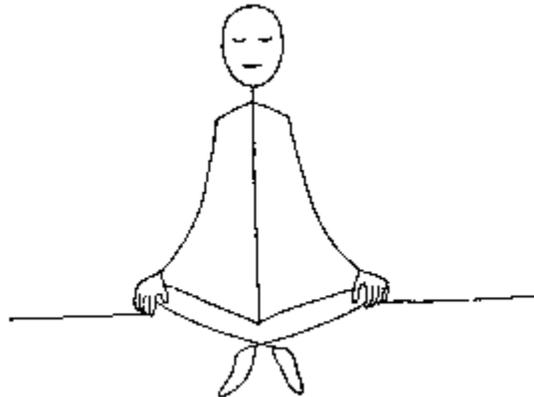
"Will you tell me the Buddha's
teachings, for I have little time
and may even be killed this
very day?"

The sage looked at the
man in the royal cloak and answered
with one word:
"Awareness."



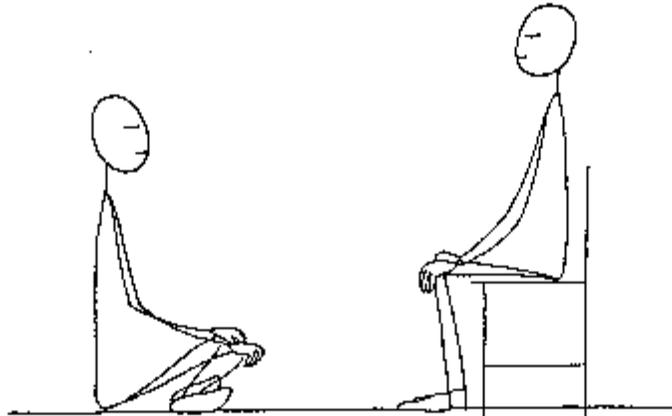
Meditation is
for those who are
born without having
it all together.

Meditation is not straining
or striving



The mind should be relaxed but alert

The back should be straight
but not tense



An insight meditation exercise



For the development of clear, mindful awareness, the Buddha taught us to closely observe the movements of the body and the mind. A good way to develop your attentiveness, concentration and insight is to watch carefully the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. In this meditation exercise we begin by observing these obvious bodily movements. When these become clear we will also be able to be aware of the more subtle movements of the mind.

Go to a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position with the eyes closed and the back straight but not rigid. The movement of the abdomen is always present. Place your attention on its natural in and out movement, making a mental note of each part of the process as it is occurring. Only be aware of the actual process of the movement, the rising and falling. As you become more and more alert and can follow the movements more carefully, you will become aware that the breathing is sometimes shallow, sometimes deep, sometimes rapid, sometimes slow and calm. But there should be no effort to control or interfere with the breathing in any way. Just watch the movements as they appear, without judgment, while you breathe normally.

While you are watching the rise and fall of the abdomen, the mind may, by itself, go towards other objects, such as thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations. These new objects should be noted as soon as they arise. If a thought comes into your mind, be aware of "thinking." If a sound comes to your attention, make a mental note of "hearing." After each mental note, firmly and calmly return your attention to the primary objects of meditation, the movements of the abdomen.

As you develop more concentration in regard to the primary objects, you will quickly notice any other object as it arises. However, until the mind is alert enough to notice these objects as soon as they arise, it will tend to

wander unmindfully after these thoughts, feelings and emotions. Some time later, the meditator will realize he has been day dreaming. As soon as he is aware that his attention has drifted away from the present moment, he should patiently note that his mind has been "wandering" and that he is now "remembering to be mindful." Then he should return his attention to the rising and falling movements.

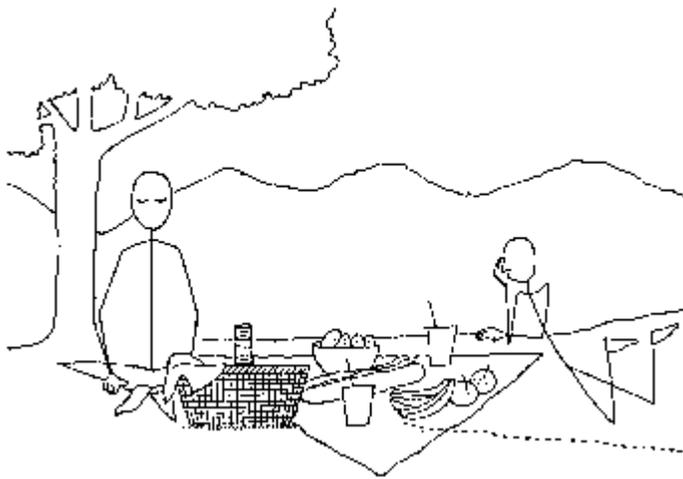
Mindfulness can also be practiced during walking meditation, with the lifting, moving and placing of the foot as the primary objects of awareness. Walk with the head upright, keeping your eyes on the ground a few feet ahead of you. Walk at a moderately slow pace, with steps small enough so that, without losing your balance, you can place one foot completely on the ground before moving the other foot. Remember to note each part of the movement as it occurs. It is a good idea to spend equal amounts of time in walking and in sitting meditation -- for example, thirty minutes of walking, then thirty of sitting; later, one hour of walking, then one hour of sitting.

During all the activities of the day --- eating, washing, moving from place to place, going from job to job --- one should be aware of the movements of the body necessary for each activity, or of whatever thought, feeling or physical sensation is predominant.

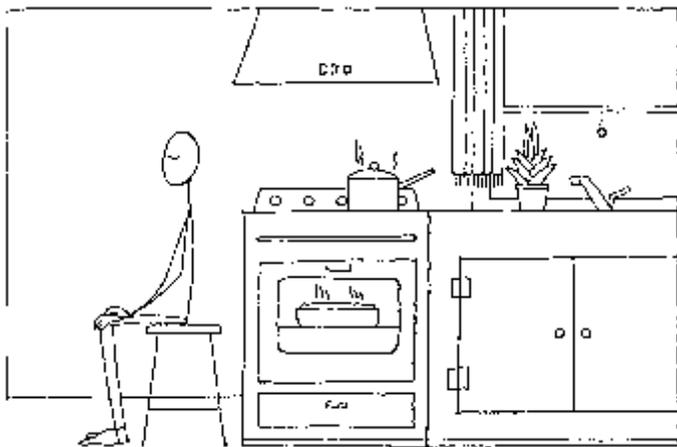
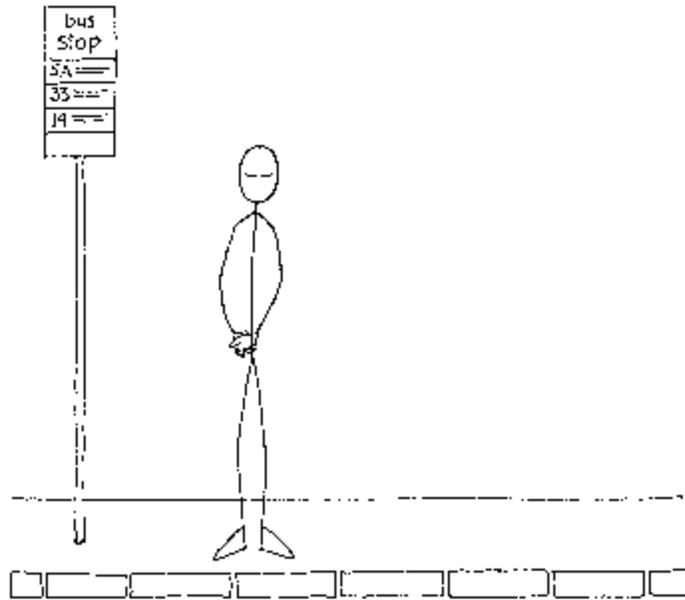
One who persists in noting all these objects as they come to his attention will develop increasingly clear awareness. Noting should be done neither too fast nor too slowly. It should be immediate, firm and clear, but not harsh. One is not to be lazy and sit daydreaming, but should instead develop an awareness that is alert and accepting of whatever objects arise. At a certain point when mindfulness is well-developed, awareness will be automatic, and there will be less and less need for making mental notes. However, whenever attention weakens, one should return to making clear notes.

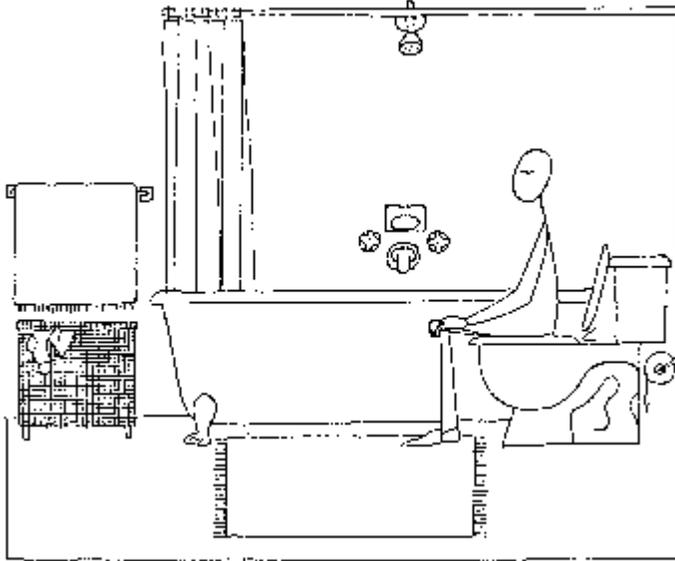
It would be convenient if one could simply "decide" to be aware. However, we are conditioned not to be aware. Our minds are trained to be complicated, and so it is necessary to re-train ourselves in order to be simply aware. The most skillful way for a beginning meditator to develop mindful awareness is to place himself under the guidance of a qualified meditation teacher for a period of intense practice. During a meditation retreat he leaves behind for a time the rush and trouble of his daily life, and

in an atmosphere of quiet mindfulness and loving kindness devotes his energy entirely to the development of awareness. The minimum length of time usually needed for beginning westerners is one month. After completing such a period of intensive meditation, one is better able to continue the development and practice of mindfulness in daily life.



What could be better than a meditation you can take anywhere?





A saint is a very simple man.
When he walks, he walks.
When he talks, he talks.
And that's all.

He doesn't
daydream while walking
or think of seeing when he's hearing.

That is very hard to do.
That is why he is a saint.

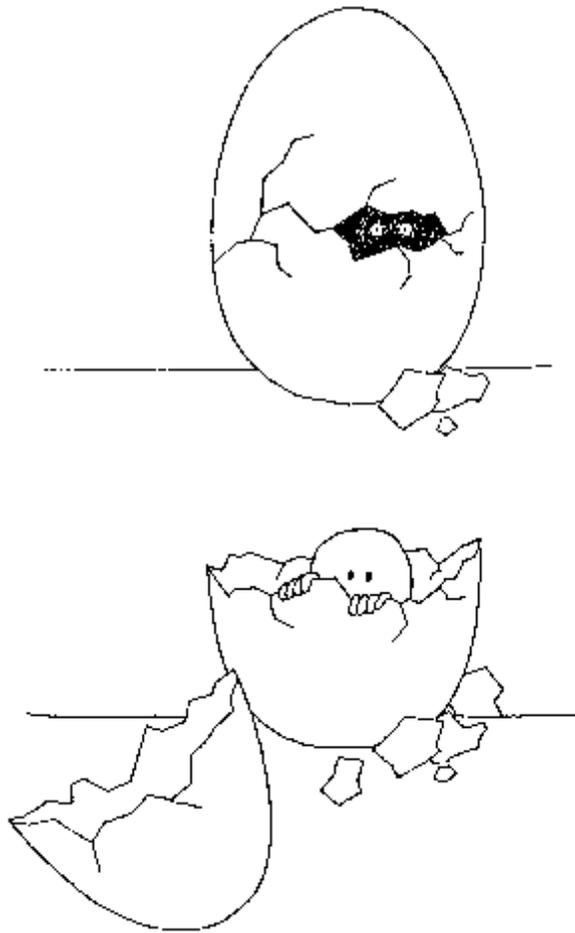
Unsatisfactoriness
is the First Noble Truth



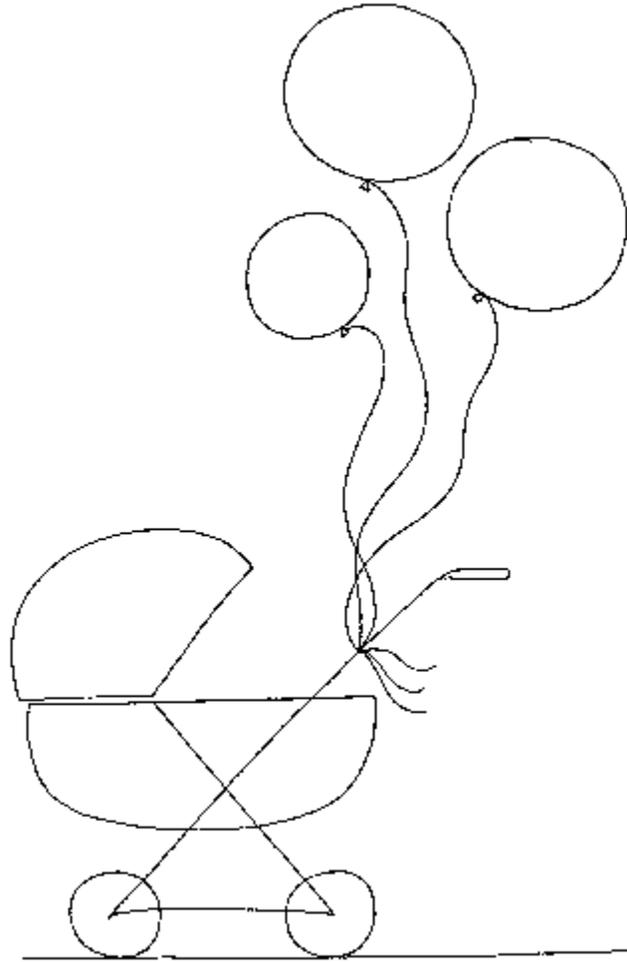
Life is suffering

But wisdom
cuts off
the suffering

When wisdom breaks
the shell
of ignorance
suffering stops

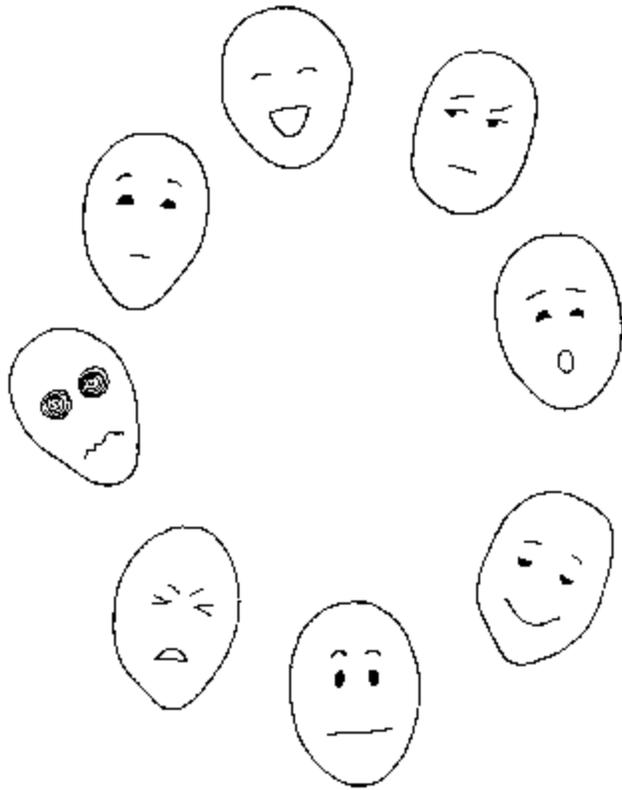


In order to understand
this problem called 'life'
we have to start from the beginning
and make the mind
like a baby's again



We run here and there
all our lives
trying to be successful,
correct and right,
when the true
goal of life
is learning

Meditation does not necessarily make us feel good



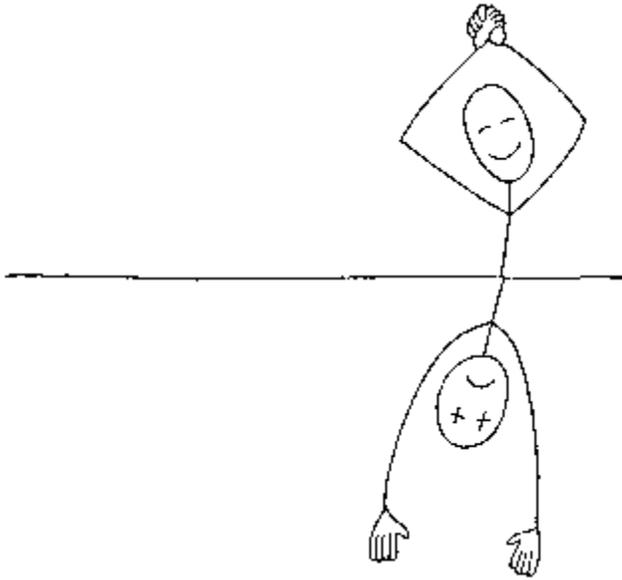
but it wakes us up to the many things we do feel

A meditation retreat
brings great relief.
For a time,
we don't have to take
our mind
and its problems
seriously.

We don't have to act
on its thousand wandering thoughts.

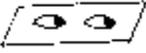
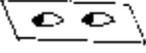
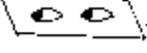
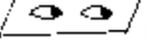
We just note them
mindfully
and they pass
away

The untrained
mind is so vulnerable
to circumstances.
Something good happens
and it's happy ...

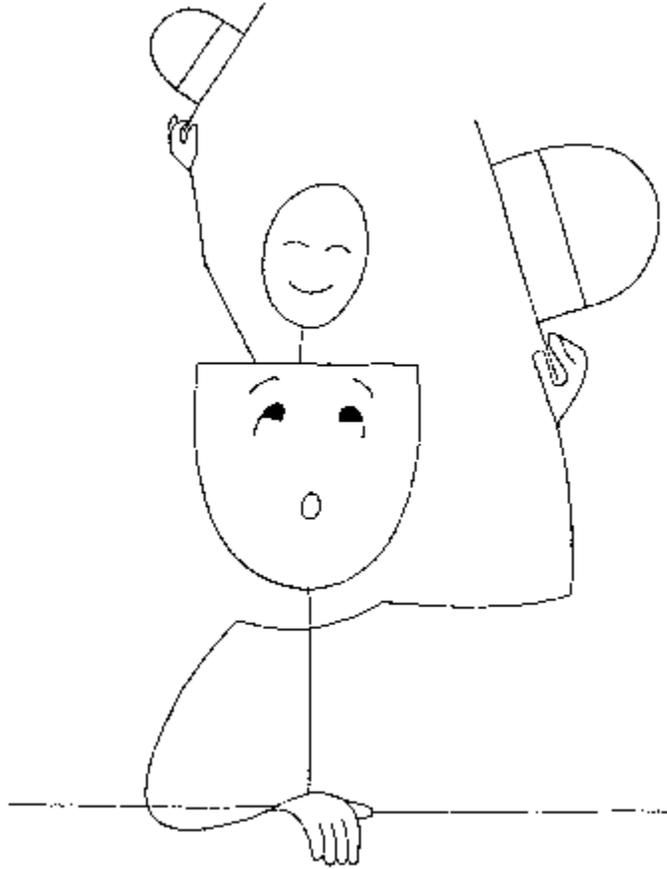


Something bad
happens and it's sad ...

One who has suffered enough
from the attachments
and aversions
of his mind's
uncontrolled wanderings
becomes

watchful  of
any direction 
in which 
 the mind
 moves

Your mind
has a mind
of its own

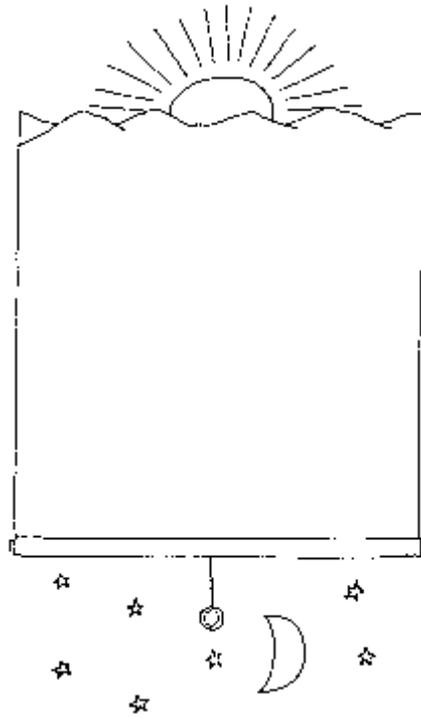


Thoughts are not necessarily
connected
with reality.

That's one reason
the Buddha taught us
to be aware
of them
before we are
influenced
by them.

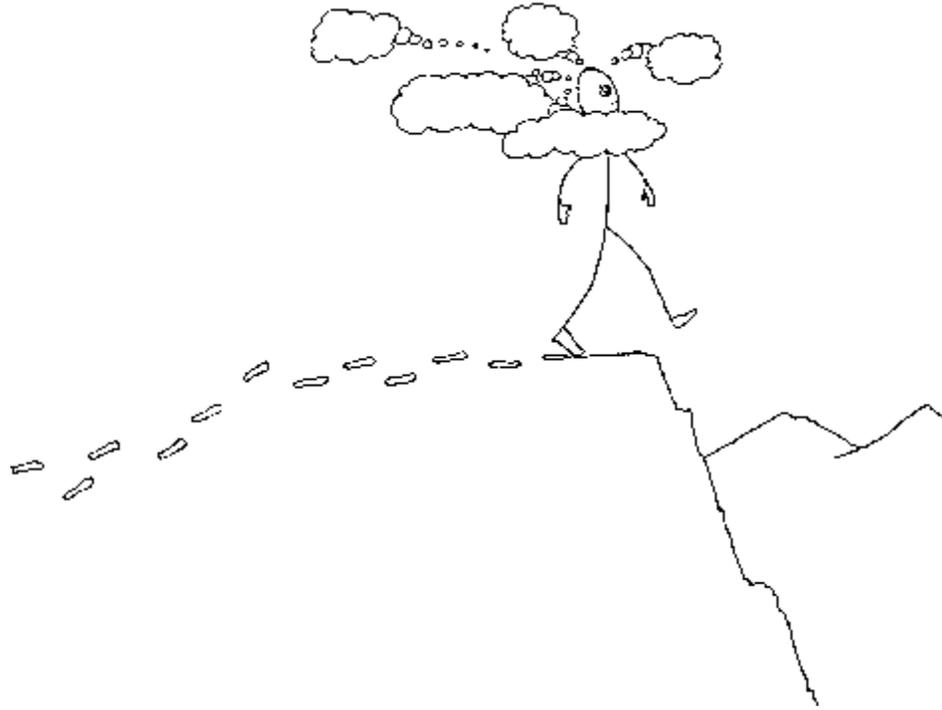
What happens between
the time we awake

and the time we
go to bed



is out
of our control

Distracted,
strangers to reality,
without awareness,
we stumble, fall
and hurl ourselves to death.



If living were easy
there would be no need
for mental training.

But because life
can be very,
very hard

we have
to meditate
much.

The mind is the
only means we have
of getting out of
this mess.

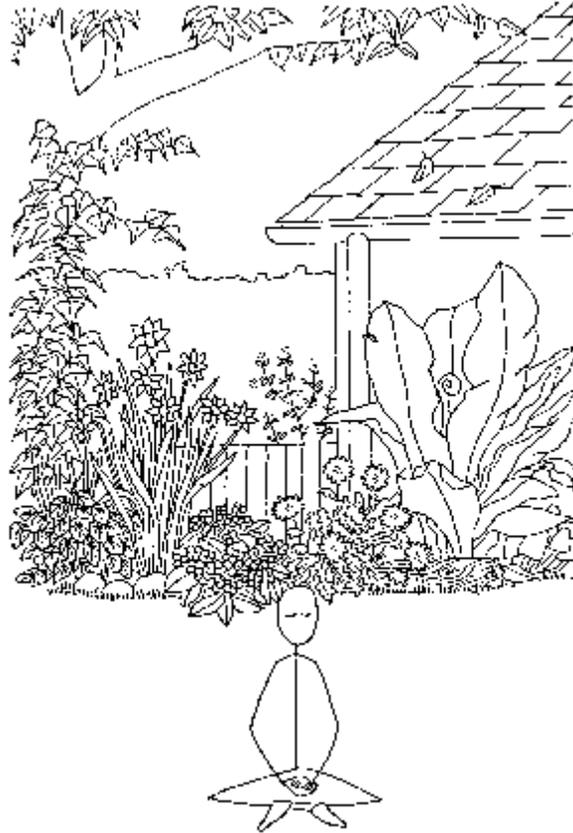
Be careful
with it.

Immorality
selfishness,
anger and
chemicals
dull this single key.



Meditating is the kindest thing we can do for ourselves.

The mind is a
garden.



By choosing
what to think
about,

we can grow
either
weeds
or
fragrant flowers.

(but even a
small weed
can learn
to grow
flowers)



Reaching
enlightenment
is just a matter
of continuous
practice

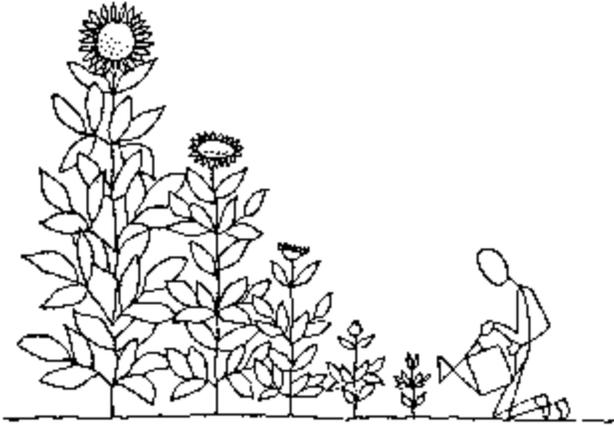
*You can
do
it*

Our characters are developed
by persistent practice.

If we practice love,
we become more loving.

If we practice patience,
we become more patient.

If we practice generosity,
we become more generous.

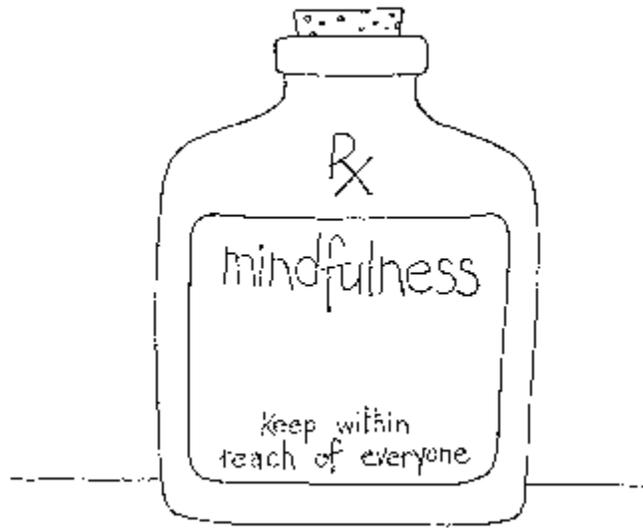


Life is unsatisfactory for many reasons. Some of these are:

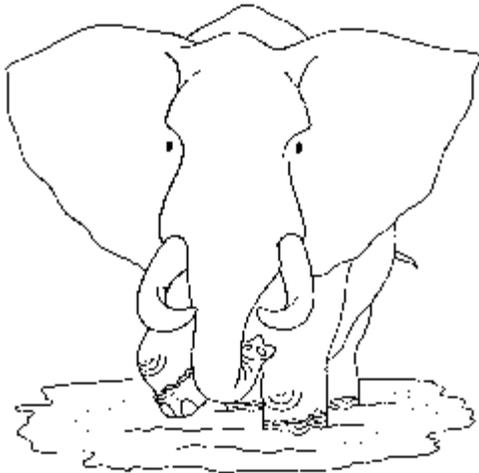
- Life is not perfect.
- Our joys are impermanent.
- No one gets out alive.
- Our bodies have to be washed over and over again.
- We must be taught by pain as well as by pleasure.
- Most of our happiness depends on mere thoughts of the past and the future.

Mindfulness is the cure

for the disease of suffering



Take delight in mindfulness.
Control your mind.
Pull yourself out
of the mire of passions



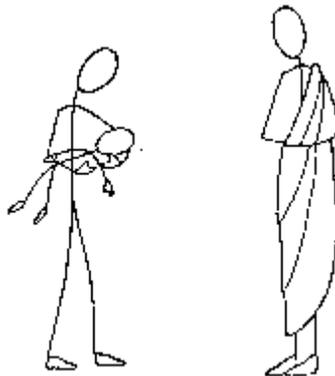
Just as an elephant,
sunk in mud,
pulls himself out.

Nothing is gained without effort.
To train your mind, you have to work
every minute, every day, every year
from one life to another.

Be kind and compassionate.
Try not to let anyone come to you
without going away happier.

Compassion is the highest
attitude.

One day a mother lost her only child. The grief drove her mad. Carrying his corpse, she went to the Buddha in search of a remedy for her dead son, not understanding he was dead. The Buddha agreed to help the mother if she brought him a bag of mustard seed. But the seed could only come from a house in which no one had ever died.



The distraught mother went from house to house asking if anyone had died there. The answer was always "yes." At every house she was told, "the living are few, but the dead are many."

After a while she understood the true nature of life. She returned to the Buddha without the mustard seed. The Buddha explained that death is

common to all living beings.

The mother understood that a human's life flickers like the light of a lamp. She finally stopped weeping and accepted the death of her only son.

Womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb
to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb
womb to tomb womb to tomb

Enlightenment is an
alternative
to life

after life
after life
after life
after life

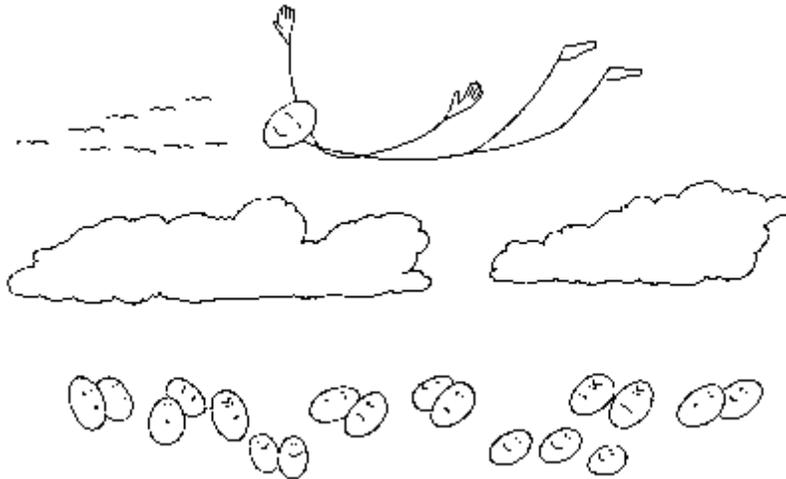
after life
after life
after life

after life
after life
after life

after life
after life

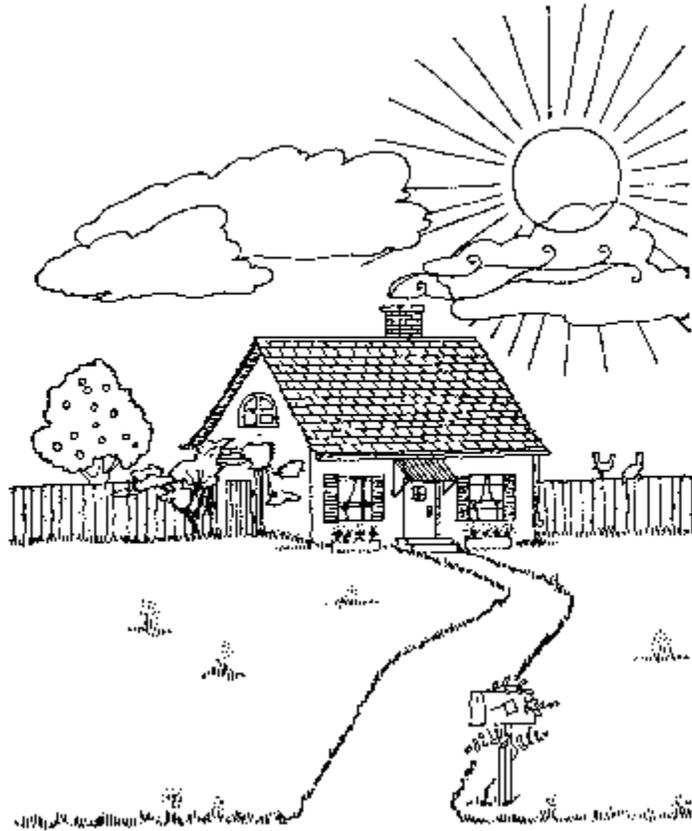
after life
after life
after life.

The naïve mind is willing to try anything, no matter how dangerous... just because of its ignorance.

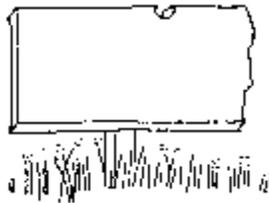


*To be free we
must be comfortable
being important or unimportant, high or low,
at any time
in any place*

Attachment is
a form of
self-cruelty

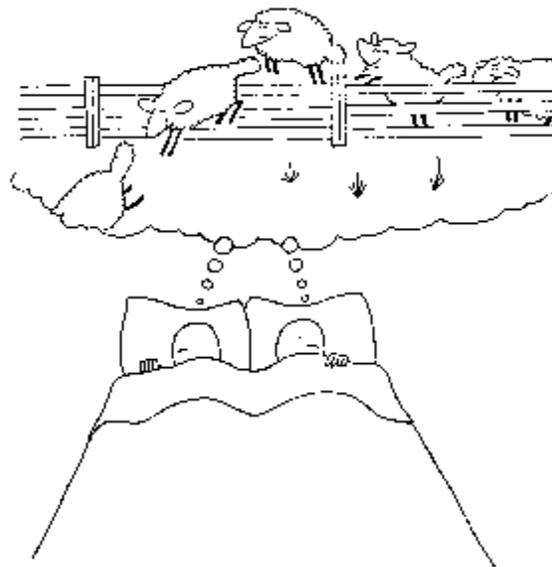
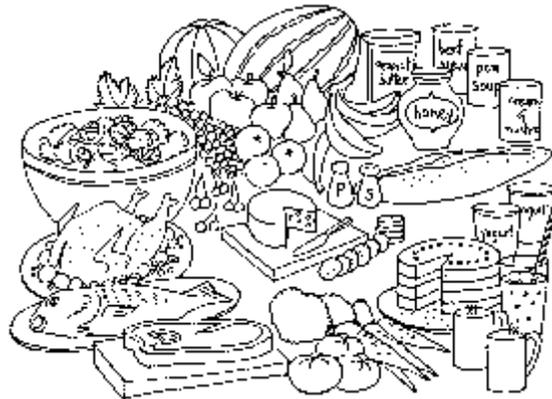


Please remember...
everything that
has a beginning
has an ending



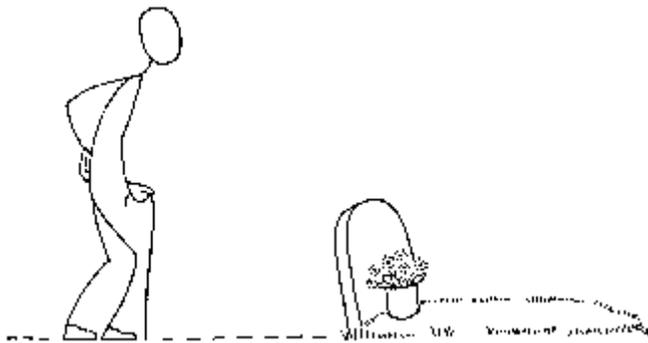
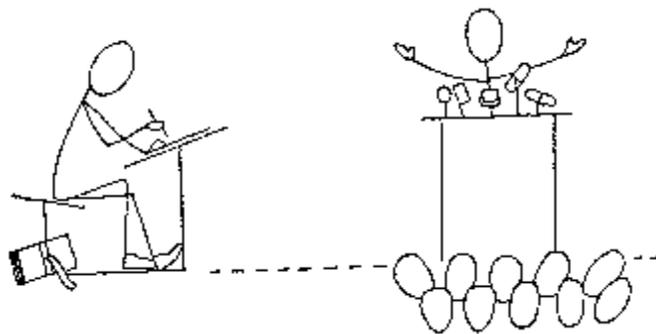
We should be able to accept any kind of food that's offered.

Attachment to a particular diet is wrong. Food in itself is not a means of transcendence. It only sustains the body while the mind works toward enlightenment.



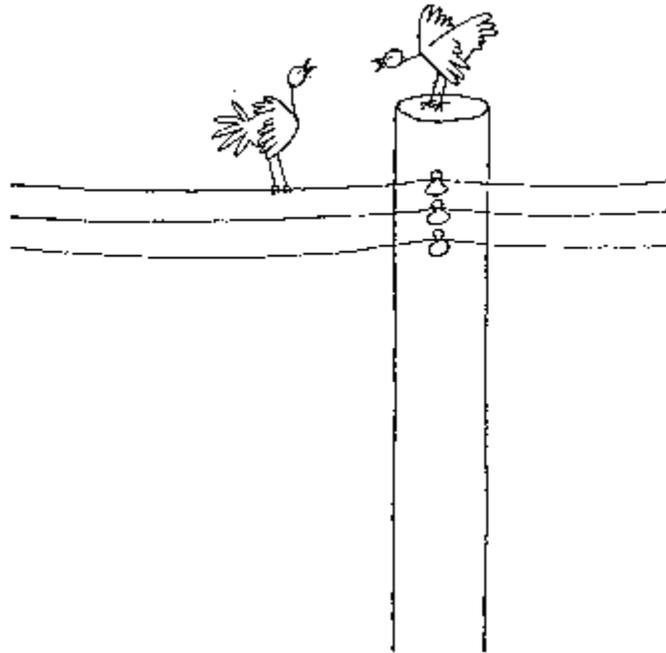
We must sleep away
one third of our lives
because we wear ourselves out
liking and disliking
all day long

Wise people are neither
optimists
nor pessimists.
They see things as they are.



Each morning
we should commit ourselves
to finding the truth
of every situation.

Is there
anything better to be
than free?



Karma means
intentional action

every time
you do a good karma
it comes back to you

Get your “but”

out of the way

I would
like to...



... but...



I'd go
there...



...but...



I could
do that...



...but...



The Buddhist does not:

hurt things
kill things
harm things.

The Buddhist does:

Act with compassion
and loving kindness;
live and let live.

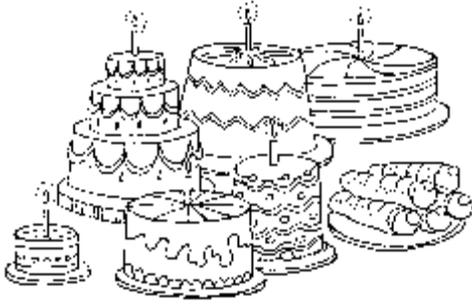
Buddhist precepts:

1. don't kill
2. don't steal
3. don't lie
4. don't commit sexual misconduct
5. don't take intoxicants

Most of us depend on
holidays, weekends
and days off



Those who cultivate
gratitude
and appreciation
celebrate
daily



Control your mind
don't be *controlled by*
your mind ...

The Story of Nanda

During the Buddha's time there was a young monk called "Nanda" who didn't understand the importance of mindfulness. One day, Nanda thought of giving his best robe to the enlightened teacher Sangara. Nanda was happy with the idea, thinking it would be an act of great merit to show such generosity towards a spiritually-developed being.

He thought, "by this noble deed, surely I will soon attain enlightenment." Because he was not yet well-trained to mindfully watch the nature of his thoughts, Nanda did not recognize the selfish desire and attachment which made his intentions impure.

The next day, Nanda waited until Sangara left the monastery. In his absence Nanda swept his room, brought water for drinking and washing, prepared a seat of cushions and flowers, and laid out the gift of the robe. When Nanda saw Sangara returning, he went out to the road, greeted him respectfully, and brought him to his quarters. Seeing the room, the teacher was pleased with the young monk's energy and kindness. Nanda took a palm leaf and began to fan the holy one. Then he presented his gift, saying that he wanted with all his heart to give his best robe to Sangara.

The teacher Sangara realized the young monk had not been mindful and

had allowed himself to become attached to the idea of giving the gift. Seeing this as an opportunity to teach Nanda the danger of lack of mindfulness, he said he already had a complete set of robes. As he had no need for the gift, he instructed Nanda to give the robe to a needy monk. Nanda repeated his request several times, only to have the teacher thank him for the gift, but instruct him to give it elsewhere.

This polite refusal hurt Nanda's feelings and resentment arose in his mind. In this confused state of mind, he stood fanning the teacher. Instead of practicing mindfulness by dismissing his resentment and attending to the fanning, Nanda permitted his mind to dwell on the incident. As his mind wandered the resentment grew, and he thought, "If Sangara is not willing to receive my gift, why should I remain a monk? I will become a householder once more."

Then his thoughts began to wander even more restlessly, taking his attention farther and farther from the present moment. "Suppose I become a householder once more," he thought. "How shall I earn a living? I will sell this robe and buy myself a she-goat. As the she-goat brings forth young, I will sell them and in this way make a profit. When I have accumulated a profit, I will take a wife, and my wife will bear me a son. I will put my son in a little cart, and taking my son and wife along with me, I will make the journey back here to pay respects to the elder Sangara. As we travel, I will say to my wife, 'Wife, bring my son, for I wish to carry him.' She will reply, 'Why should you carry the boy? You push the cart.' Saying this, she will take the boy in her arms, thinking to carry him herself. But, lacking strength, she will let him fall in the road and the cart will run over him. Then I will say to her, 'Wife, you have ruined me.' So saying I will bring down my stick upon her head."

So pondered Nanda as he stood fanning the elder. Consumed by his reflections, he swung his palm-leaf fan and brought it down on the head of the elder. Sangara asked himself, "Why has Nanda struck me on the head?" Immediately becoming aware of every thought which had passed through Nanda's mind, Sangara said to him, "Nanda, you did not succeed in hitting the woman, but what has an old teacher done to deserve a beating?" Nanda thought to himself, "I am a disgrace! The elder knows the foolish thoughts which have passed through my mind."

Sangara told Nanda that if he sought forgiveness he should come and sit before him. Trembling, Nanda sat down, his eyes cast downward toward the floor he had so proudly swept just a short time before.

Sangara patiently said, "Nanda, do you see that you have made no effort to mindfully watch your thoughts, and do you see how needlessly you have suffered because of your mind's unnoticed wanderings? Your gift was not freely given because you demanded that it be received in a specific way. When your demands were unfulfilled you suffered resentment. The resentment was allowed to grow unwatched until it made you completely unmindful. As you stood fanning me, you negligently became absorbed in wandering thoughts which had nothing to do with the present moment.

"Do you see now the danger of unmindful thinking? Do you see that if the mind is not carefully watched, one becomes painfully absorbed in unwholesome states of mind? One unwholesome mental state weakens the mind so that it becomes susceptible to another and another. In this way, your mind, weakened by selfish desires, became caught up in attachment, which led to disappointment, resentment, delusion, and now, regret.

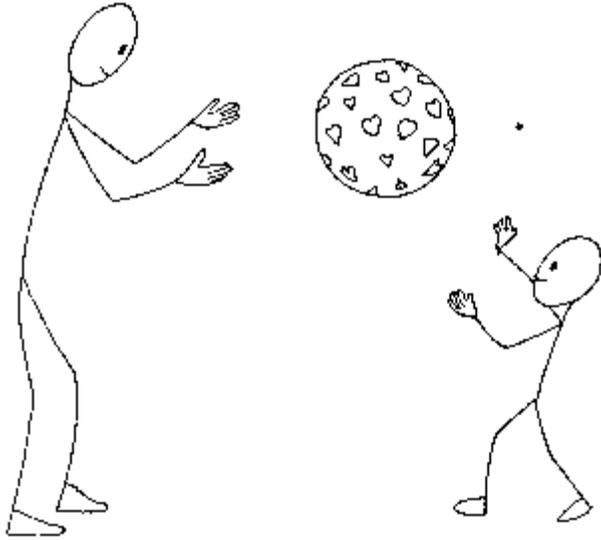
"Nanda, work gently and persistently to develop mindfulness. As you have seen, one who does not live each moment in mindful awareness is headed toward one painful experience after another. But he who learns to watch the restless cravings and painful attachments of the mind will soon give up suffering."

A human being
who controls his mind
Is a saint

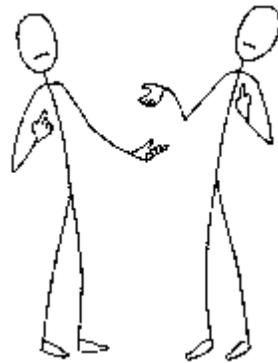
Irritation
is
natural.

Warts are
natural,
too.

Express your love to your children



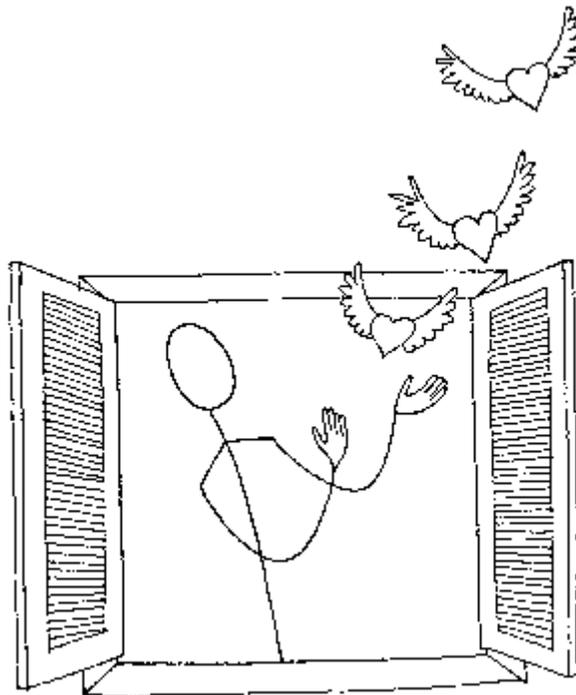
Tell them every day
how much you love them



When we

demand things of
other people,
our relationships
are not free.

Loving kindness is not possessive



Being impeccable means:

consciously choosing
who our friends are,
what we eat,
where we live,
what clothes we wear –
everything.

Generosity is a prerequisite for progress on the spiritual path. Simple generosity leads to non-attachment. And non-attachment is the key to freedom from suffering. Like all virtues, generosity needs constant attention in order to grow and mature.



The Story of Visakha

Visakha, the daughter of a millionaire, was a very generous lady and the chief benefactress of the Buddha. She gave alms regularly and tended to the monks who lived at the monastery.

One day she went to visit the Buddha, wearing her most valuable jewels. On the way she decided her attire was inappropriate, and gave her jewels to her servant for temporary safe-keeping.

After reaching the monastery and listening to the Buddha's discourse, Visakha returned home accompanied by her servant. But the servant had forgotten about the jewels and had left them at the monastery. Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, found the jewels and put them in a safe place until Visakha returned.

When Visakha heard what had happened, she decided to use it as an opportunity to give a great gift to the order of monks. She decided to sell the jewels and use the money for the order. But on discovering that no one could afford such expensive jewelry, she decided to buy it herself and use the money for things the monks needed.

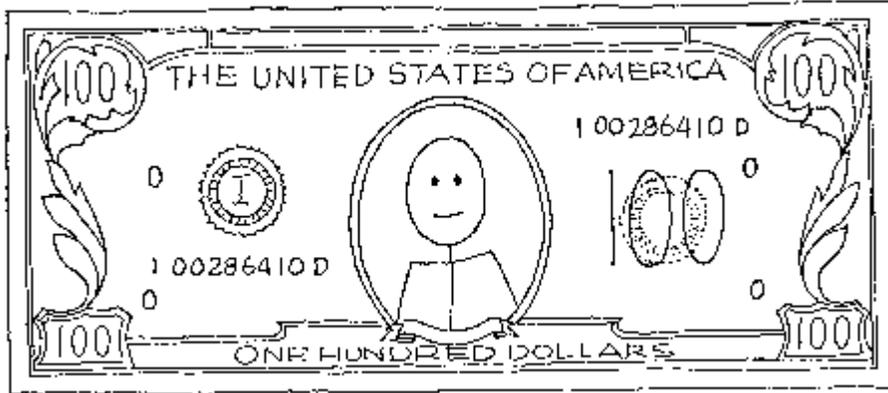
The Buddha, pleased with her generosity, suggested she build a monastery, which she did. The Buddha stayed at this monastery with his disciples for six rainy seasons (an annual, 3-month period in late summer and fall).

Rather than chastising her servant, Visakha was grateful for the occasion to perform this meritorious deed.

Prosperity

results from

generosity



The Story of Anathapindika

The Buddha's greatest supporter was Anathapindika, a wealthy businessman from Savatthi. When Anathapindika first heard of the Buddha, a fully-enlightened teacher, his desire to meet him was very strong. Rather than waiting until the next day to visit, he traveled alone through the forest on that same night, in total darkness, to the place where the Buddha was staying. Anathapindika met the Buddha just before dawn.

Upon receiving instruction from the Buddha, Anathapindika's inspiration was so great that he invited the Buddha, along with the entire community of monks, to stay with him for the rainy season.

The Buddha accepted, and Anathapindika set about finding a suitable place to build a monastery. He finally came upon the pleasure park of Jeta, the prince of Savatthi. Now, this park was a wonderful place, serene and peaceful and fulfilling all the requirements for a monastery. A place such as this Prince Jeta was reluctant to lose. He told Anathapindika the price would be equivalent to the number of gold coins it took to cover every inch of ground in the entire park. He thought this high price would deter Anathapindika.

But when Anathapindika started hauling in the gold in carts, Prince Jeta realized this was no ordinary purchase. When Anathapindika's gold coins

ran out, leaving a small spot uncovered, Prince Jeta offered that patch of ground as his gift to the order of monks. The monastery was constructed, and the Buddha spent a great part of his life there, giving many discourses.

The gift of truth excels all gifts

There have been many
would-be saviors
in the world

no one
has succeeded
in saving the world

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Save yourself

Rather than trying to convince anybody
that meditation is the right path,
we can show by our attitude
(compassion, wisdom, kindness)
the benefits of meditation

About the author

An American who began his search for understanding at an early age, Sujata traveled half-way around the world where he found some very rare people who, unlike all others he had met, were not plagued by the universal human enslavements of hatred, attachment and selfishness.

Using the tools of insight meditation which he practiced as a Buddhist monk, Sujata teaches meditators to watch carefully the ways of the mind. As resident teacher of Stillpoint Institute, he guides others along the Buddha's path, through the difficult process of laying down the burden of self.
