



TCVC sponsors a Dhamma Talk



with Wes Nisker

Tuesday, September 29

Registration: 7:00 P.M. Talk: 7:30 P.M.

Unity Church, 732 Holly Avenue, St. Paul, MN

Wes Nisker has practiced Buddhist insight meditation for 25 years with various teachers in Asia and the West. Wes leads classes and workshops in Buddhist meditation at Spirit Rock Center in Fairfax, California, at U.C. Berkeley, Esalen Institute, and other venues internationally. This talk is offered in the spirit of generosity. Donations are gratefully accepted, but not expected.

This talk is followed by a five-day silent meditation retreat that begins the following evening. See Page 6 of this

call Unity Church at 228-1456 for directions

call Terri Hanson at 647-0658 for further information

States of Mind

by Wes Nisker

Following is an excerpt from Wes Nisker's new book Buddha's Nature: Evolution as a Practical Guide to Enlightenment, to be published by Bantam Books in October, 1998.

We are temporarily identifiable wiggles in a stream that enters us in the form of light, heat, air, water, milk...It goes out as gas and excrement...and also as semen, babies, talk, politics, war, poetry and music.

Alan Watts

The third foundation of mindfulness focuses attention on what Buddhist teachers often refer to as mind-states, and what we commonly call emotions. The Pali word for this foundation, *citta*, is often translated as "heart-mind", which indicates that we are looking at the feeling-tones of the mind, the different colored filters through which we perceive the world. In the Buddhist system, a mind-state can also refer to a condition of awareness, such as concentration or delusion. Generally speaking, a mind-state is what we expect a report on when we ask someone, "How are you?"

At this point on our evolutionary journey we arrive at an experience that appears to be uniquely human. What began as simple sensations now becomes part of an individual drama. A sound or touch is now being interpreted through "you", a vast interplay of instincts, temperament, culturization, life experiences, and a complex sorting and memory system. The feelings of pleasant or unpleasant have grown more varied and nuanced, and are given names like happiness, irritation, sadness or love. A story line has now entered the picture; a personality has appeared.

The importance of the third foundation of mindfulness should be rather obvious; your mind-state is how you feel right now. And— as a correction to a popular assumption— what you *feel* is what you really get. Therefore paying attention to your mind-states and how they are produced and altered should be very high up on your list of things to do.

As we investigate our states of mind, we should take into account the latest scientific understanding, which presents an extremely unromantic view of our most cherished human sentiments. In his book, *The Emotional Brain*, neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux claims that emotions are

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States of Mind continued..

nothing more than the feelings associated with basic survival functions. LeDoux explains that all animal species have evolved systems that handle procreation, feeding, and fight or flight responses, and, writes LeDoux, "...when these systems function in an animal that also has the capacity for conscious awareness, then conscious emotional feelings occur." By this definition, anger and hatred are just labels we give to sensations associated with the protective instinct, while affection is simply our awareness of an evolved aspect of the procreation system. ("What's love got to do with it...")

The Buddhist sages also point out the close connection between our instinctual reactions and the resulting mind-state or emotion. In fact, this is the link between the second and third foundations of mindfulness. We react with simple approach or avoidance to a sensation of pleasant or unpleasant (second foundation), which routinely leads to a full blown emotional state (third foundation) of grasping or aversion. Like the scientists, the Buddhist sages saw that we are usually not conscious of this connection. Therefore we take our emotions to be self-generated and freely chosen. We mistake each emotion as "I" or "self", and become completely identified and lost in it. We fail to see that emotions are happening on their own. We don't realize that they are evolution's emotions.

Most important of all, the sages discovered that we do not have to be driven by these primal or habitual reactions. By bringing more consciousness to the emotional process we can actually gain new choices over our feelings and behavior. We can free our hearts and minds— at least to some degree— from the chains of past conditioning, and can actually learn how to cultivate the most satisfying states of mind.

The sage is independent. Sorrow and avarice do not cling to him as water does not stick to the lotus leaf.

The Buddha, Jara Sutra

The early Buddhist sages investigated the nature of their own minds with such care and precision that eventually they recognized one hundred and twenty one classes of consciousness, and eighty-nine different mind-states. Just as the Eskimos have many different words for snow, the sages gave their most careful attention to that which surrounded them all the time— the colors and textures of their mind.

If you check in at any given moment during the day you will notice the presence of one mind-state or another. Although this may seem obvious, the truth is that we are generally not conscious of our mind-states, their origin, or how they function in our lives. We are caught in them and

by them, but we rarely notice their existence. We don't see our mind's condition, because we are *inside* that condition.

When I check to see how I am feeling, I will often discover that I am inhabited by an emotion that moved in without my permission. Sometimes I will be feeling mildly irritated or grumpy and will suddenly realize that I am hungry, and that the feeling of irritation is being generated by a low blood sugar level. Or else I will examine a bad mood and realize that it started with some task that didn't go well in the morning, or a remark someone made hours ago, but the emotional state is still operating, feeding on its own momentum. In general, I realize that I am often not exactly *conscious* of how I am feeling. And when I do check in, I discover that I am not having a feeling, so much as a feeling is having me.

The instructions in the Mahasatipattana Sutra tell us, quite simply, to become aware of our mind states and emotions. "A [meditator] knows a lustful mind as lustful, a mind free from lust as free from lust; a hating mind as hating, a mind free from hate as free from hate..." Since a mind state can also be distinguished by the degree of consciousness that is present, the meditator is also instructed to notice "a distracted mind as distracted," "a concentrated mind as concentrated," "a deluded mind as deluded."

Contrary to what you might expect from a "spiritual" text, the various emotions and mind-states are neither condemned nor praised. They are first of all to be understood as natural occurrences, arising as a condition of being human— having a body, contact with the world, and the basic feeling of pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

Furthermore, if we can just observe or name a mind-state, we are no longer completely identified with it; some part of us is simply aware. Once we are no longer lost in the mind-states we begin to recognize them as a function of a nature based in evolution. We see that the mind we are given has different settings— ups and downs, various speed levels, degrees of clarity— and these change due to various causes and conditions. As we begin to see our mind-states as somewhat generic, we no longer have to take them so personally. Although all the different mind-states will continue to come and go, we will no longer drown in their spells.

Thus any feeling whatsoever— past, future or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle, common or sublime, far or near; every feeling— is to be seen as it actually is with right understanding: "This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am."

The Buddha, Samyutta Nikaya

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States of Mind continued..**The Dissatisfied Mind:
An Organic Blues**

If you begin to check in on your mind-states, you may notice the almost constant presence of desire. Even in moments that you recognize as contentment or satisfaction, you might feel your mind moving, however slightly, into the future, or finding some little fault with the present situation.

The First Noble Truth of Buddhism states that life is inherently unsatisfactory. There may be certain moments right after you have fulfilled one desire or another—following a meal, sex, or winning some competitive game—when you may feel satisfied for a little while. But that feeling generally doesn't last long. Often only a few minutes will pass before another desire or discomfort arises. In that way, life is a little bit like eating Chinese food.

What can truly feel embarrassing is to catch yourself desiring what you already have, or desiring to be where you already are. I am sometimes aware, especially upon discovering some new beach, nature walk or restaurant, that I will start looking forward to coming back to that place, long before I have even left it. I will be planning to return with the proper apparel, the right friends, or at a different time of day, so that I can have a more perfect experience of the place where I already am, but not really, since my mind has already moved on to my next experience of that very place.

Dissatisfaction appears to be built in to the human condition, and although that may sound cruel, it is apparently in the best interest of our survival. The brain maintains a certain degree of unease running continually, keeping us monitoring the world for some advantage or danger, always a little on edge and ready for action. The source may lie somewhere within the brain stem, perhaps in the reticular activating system, or in the hypothalamus. Experiments on several animal species indicate that we share this perpetual unease with many forms of life, and may have inherited it directly from those in the jungle or savannahs who needed to stay on full time alert for both predators and prey. Eat or be eaten was the law by which they lived.

We still need to be on watch for new threats and opportunities, but the alarm system may be too sensitive for our current situation. People living in modern society with great abundance and apparent security still can't seem to relax. Many live in a constant state of high alert, even though there is no lion at the door.

Our condition is made abundantly clear by recent psychological studies, which find that a majority of people

feel most dissatisfied when they are alone with nothing special to do. (Perhaps that is why we try to keep so busy.) Being alone with nothing to do sounds like a time to relax and enjoy life, but the subjects report that their minds wander, and usually land on negative or anxiety producing thoughts. It appears that our survival brain is always trying to anticipate negative situations, looking ahead, rehearsing for disasters. That is useful for a long life— if you can call that living.

Planning for the future is usually motivated by some degree of fear or unease. The next time you notice yourself trying to figure out a career, family, or financial decision, also bring your attention to the feeling-tone behind that figuring. Use your mindfulness to explore the emotional charge that generates the planning. Can you sense the connection between the two? Can you recognize your planning as a tool in your evolved survival kit? Nature is telling you, "Think or die!"— and you are just following orders.

The Buddha may not have known exactly where our unease and future plan-maker were located in the brain, but he understood that they are intrinsic to the human condition. He also discovered that mindfulness meditation is a way of relieving the tension. That does not mean shutting down the survival brain: psychological studies of meditators reveal that not only are they more relaxed, but they can also respond more quickly to stimuli. Meditation seems to enable people to settle more comfortably into each moment's experience and still remain alert for sudden threats and flying objects. Perhaps becoming more familiar with how our brain and nervous system operate makes them more efficient and user friendly.

As strange as it sounds, meditators may also be discovering that they are more secure and content than they had previously realized. This very moment may be quite fine, and because of ancient conditioning we simply don't notice.

Do not pursue the past. Do not lose yourself in the future. Looking deeply at life as it is in this very moment, the meditator dwells in stability and freedom.

The Buddha, Bhaddakaratta Sutra

**Vipassana Koan!**

Is mindfulness a state of mind?

William Prottegeir

Let's Go and Let Go

by Dick Wilson

Let's Go and Let Go
They live inside.
ya know, along with
Prejudice and Pride.
Let's Go's a young and restless kid
Never satisfied with what we did,
Looking always 'round the bend
He takes my rope right to its end.
He's never happy here, oh no!
It's there he wants to be and so
He tries constantly
to make a child of me.
"Let's go, let's go," this kid won't stop,
But just when I'm about to drop,
Let Go appears, Let Go, ah yes,
The knowing one, I must confess
This guy does seem to know the way
The how, the where, the what to say.
He's read the books, he's written some.
The rest of us all think we're dumb
When Let Go comes to straighten us
And starts to drive our wayward bus
But oh my goodness, when he does
He doesn't drive at all because
That's not the way Let Go believes
And so this bus called us, it heaves
And haws and we hang on
With open jaws,
Afraid of every curve and bend,
But somehow, angels must attend,
'Cause Let Go finds us peace of mind
And gets us to the next incline.
And somehow, there we find at last
A moment of the great repast
Has come and aren't we s'pose to fast
Or breathe or pray
Or have some special words to say?
And so we sit in silence there
And send our Source a soulful prayer
And thank with closed and sacred eyes
The one all powerful and wise.
This moment is, ah, broken, yes
By guess who? No.
Let's Go!

Introducing the 1998-99 Coordinating Committee

Since the Annual Meeting on May 9, all coordinator positions on the **TCVC Coordinating Committee** have been filled.

The **Retreat Coordinator** position, held last year by Betty Kuhn, will be filled by Robin Blake. Merrra Young will continue as backup Retreat Coordinator.

Continuing in the **Treasurer** position she began last year is Virginia Robinson, with Terri Hanson continuing as backup.

Last year's **Secretary**, Elena Walker, moved to Boulder to study Hakomi. Replacing her is Naomi Baer. Mark Nunberg will fill in as backup secretary.

Newsletter Coordinator is Joanne Skarjune, who already provided us with the May newsletter. Mark will also back up this position.

Patrice Koelsch continues as Volunteer Coordinator, with Steve Burt as a backup replacing Wendy Morris (aka *M o m*).

Assisting the treasurer, Linda Hall will continue in the position of Retreat Registrar. Vera Matich will serve as alternate registrar.

Paul Norr continues to maintain the mailing list and Sylvester Fernandez continues to coordinate mailings.

Terri Hanson will continue to oversee the mailbox with Mike Rabe filling in when she leaves for an extended retreat in November.

Kay Wicker will continue to handle the Info Line.

Marilyn Habermas-Scher has volunteered to be a roving backup.

A big thank you to both outgoing and incoming members for the gift of their time and talent to keep TCVC moving successfully forward!

The next business meeting is Sept. 3 at Common Ground Meditation Center. All are welcome to attend. Social is at 7:00 P.M.; the meeting starts at 7:30 P.M.



Grassroots Dhamma

is published by the Twin Cities Vipassana Cooperative. We welcome material relating to your Vipassana practice at home, in retreat, and in daily life. Newcomers and old timers are equally encouraged to contribute. The deadline for submission of copy for the next issue is November. 20, 1998. Please send copy to Jskarjune@aol.com or:

TCVC
P.O. Box 14683
Mpls., MN 55414
Attention Grassroots Dhamma

Joanne Skarjune produces this newsletter with editorial help from Robin Blake and Terri Hanson. David Skarjune gave technical assistance. Wes Nisker photo credit © Jerry Bauer. Paul Norr maintains and prints the mailing list. Sylvester Fernandez is responsible for the mailings. Please send your name and address to the TCVC address above to be added to the mailing list.

Treasurer's Report

by Virginia Robinson

Current Balances:

Operating Fund	\$2,567
Retreat Fund	\$38
Scholarship Fund	\$1,662
Reserve Fund	\$1,500

Send donations to:

TCVC
P.O. Box 14683
Mpls., MN 55414
Attention Treasurer

Please indicate which fund you wish to support. TCVC operates as an informal club. Donations are not tax deductible.

Community Announcements

Open House. On Sunday, September 27, Marilyn Frank will have an Open House in honor of the Jewish High Holidays from 2-4 P.M. in Mankato. Everyone is welcome. This is a great time to go hiking in the nearby woods. Call (507) 387-2030 or e-mail marilynfrank@mankato.msus.edu for information and directions.

Preparing for the Jewish High

Holidays. If you are interested in meditating or discussing Jewish/Buddhist issues either on or before Rosh Hashanah and/or Yom Kippur contact Marilyn Habermas-Scher at her business phone (504-1470) or Marilyn Frank (see Open House above).

The morning breeze
Fills this bag of bones
With sunshine and birdsong.
Now it's time for breakfast.

Wade B.

Practice Opportunities

Common Ground Meditation Center

Supporting the Twin Cities mindfulness meditation community. Call for current flyer.
3400 East 26th Street
Mpls., MN 55406
722-8260 (Mark and Wynn)

Phat An Temple/Vietnamese

Buddhist Association of Minnesota
Vipassana practice. Call for more information.

475 Minnesota Avenue
Roseville, MN 55113 927-7231
Sat. 6 to 9 A.M. Meditation

Center for Mindful Living

Michael O'Neal and Joen Snyder
O'Neal offer introductory mindfulness courses modeled on the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn. They also lead ongoing practice groups in Thich Nhat Hanh and Soto Zen style Buddhist practice including classes, retreats and community events. Call for current flyer.

3206 Holmes Avenue
Mpls., MN 55408 825-7658

Shambala Center

Tibetan Practice.
1304 University Ave NE (2nd floor)
Mpls., MN 55458 331-7737
Sun. 10-12 A.M. Meditation

Clouds in Water Zen Center

Daily open meditation sessions, classes, retreats and individual sessions. Call for newsletter or see our web site at
<http://www.ciwzc.com/ciwzc>.
308 Prince Street (by the Farmers' Market), St. Paul, MN 55101
222-6968 (Mike Port, guiding teacher)

Dharma Field Zen Center

Dharma Field welcomes all who would like to practice meditation or learn more about Zen Buddhism. Please call for current schedule.
3118 West 49th Street
Mpls., MN 55410
928-4868 (Steve Hagen, head teacher)

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center.

Soto Zen Practice. Call for daily sit information or e-mail us at mnzenctr@aol.com.
3343 East Calhoun Parkway
Mpls., MN 55408 822-5313
Sun. 9:15 A.M. Meditation
Sun. 10 A.M. Lecture

Buddhist Peace Fellowship

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship is committed to open hearted, engaged Buddhism and is a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The local chapter meets monthly at various Buddhist centers from 7 to 9 P.M. For information, contact Martha Boesing at 825-2820 or Lee Lewis at 699-1330.

Sept. 1 MN Zen Meditation Center
Oct. 6 Clouds in Water Zen Center
Nov. 3 Friends Meeting House

Metta on Maui

Kamala Masters and Steve Armstrong are teaching a two-week Loving-Kindness and Insight Meditation retreat from Feb. 20 - Mar. 6, 1999 on Maui, Hawaii. The cost is \$700. For more information, contact Vipassana Metta Foundation
PO Box 1188
Kula, HI 96790-1188
(808) 573-3450
website: <http://www.maui.net/~metta>.



TCVC Residential Vipassana Retreat

Wednesday, September 30 8:00 P.M. through Sunday noon, October 4.
Registration 6:30 - 7:30 P.M.



Meditation Retreat with Wes Nisker

During this retreat we will practice the time-honored art of Buddhist insight meditation in order to explore our human condition, and in the process bring more ease and understanding to our lives. Through a creative use of traditional Buddhist meditation practices we will specifically examine our nature *as nature*, and our place in the grander scheme of things. Included will be guided meditations on the breath and heartbeat; on the body as composed of natural elements; the skeleton; death and dying; our instinctual *animal* nature; the origin of thoughts and emotions; the tricky delusions of the mind. The talks and discussions will present both traditional Buddhist views of self and reality, as well as some of the latest information from evolutionary biology and psychology to support and guide the meditations. With an attitude of curiosity and playfulness we will explore what Buddhists refer to as our "true nature" and in the process find relief from the sufferings of a separate, disconnected self. The retreat will be held in silence.

Teacher Biography

Wes Nisker has practiced Buddhist insight meditation for 25 years with various teachers in Asia and the West. He is the founder and editor of the biannual Buddhist journal *Inquiring Mind*, and author of *Buddha's Nature: Evolution as a Practical Guide to Enlightenment* and *Crazy Wisdom*. Wes leads classes and workshops in Buddhist meditation at Spirit Rock Center in Fairfax, California, at U.C. Berkeley, Esalen Institute, and other venues internationally.

Meals and Facilities

The retreat includes meals beginning with Thursday breakfast through lunch on Sunday. All meals are vegetarian and high in carbohydrates. You may elect to eat none of the food provided by the center if you have special dietary needs. A kitchenette is available for those who must prepare their own food because of health reasons.

Accommodations at the Tau Center include private rooms with towels and bedding supplied. Showers and bathrooms are shared. Please bring comfortable, loose-fitting clothes and a blanket if you tend to get chilly sitting. Bring a cushion and soft floor pad for meditation, or you may sit on a chair if you prefer.

The Tau Center's phone number is (507) 454-2993. **Please use for emergencies only. Do not direct questions to the Tau Center.**

Scholarships and Dana

Scholarships are available on a limited basis. A letter giving the background of your need and the specific amount of your request must be received by TCVC no later than September 11. The maximum scholarship is half of room and board. Those with financial resources may wish to help others by donating to the scholarship fund.

Vipassana teachers charge no fees for their teachings. They rely for support on *dana*, a form of voluntary and anonymous giving by their students. *Dana* allows teachers to continue to devote themselves to teaching, and gives students an opportunity to practice generosity and open-heartedness. There is no expected contribution; give what feels right and is within your means.

Retreat Fees and Registration

TCVC welcomes both new and experienced meditators to this retreat.

This retreat was scheduled to begin Wednesday night to encourage full-time participation and minimize the disruptions that many different attendance schedules create. Please help us achieve this goal by attending the full retreat, if at all possible.

It is our policy to ask all retreatants to be present for the start of the retreat on Wednesday night. Early departures are not eligible for a reduced rate or refund.

All registrants must pay room and board fees plus a non-refundable registration fee covering retreat center fees and TCVC expenses associated with the retreat. Applications, accompanied by a check for the full cost of the retreat, must be received by September 11. You will not receive a confirmation of your registration.

Late registrations will not be accepted. Refunds for room and board fees cannot be guaranteed after September 11.

Correspondence about this retreat should be addressed to the registrar, Linda Hall at (612) 228-0440, or TCVC, PO Box 14683, Minneapolis, MN 55414.

Please do not use scented toiletries, such as essential oils, perfumes and lotions at the retreat. The scents from these products are distracting and may trigger allergies.

Directions to the Tau Center in Winona, MN

The Tau Center is about 2 ½ hours by car southeast of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Arrangements can be made for transportation by car pool from the Twin Cities or the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport. See the map below or contact the registrar for directions.

Please mail the form below with your payment to: TCVC, PO Box 14683, Minneapolis, MN 55414

TCVC Sept 30-Oct 4 Retreat Registration Form

Registration must be received and paid in full by Sept. 11. Late registrations will not be accepted. All retreatants must be present for the opening night of the retreat. Early departures are not eligible for a reduced rate or refund.

Name _____ Phone (____) _____ M F (Circle One)

Address _____ City, State, ZIP _____

\$ 46.00 Registration fee. Not refundable after September 11, 1998.

\$ _____ Room and board (with meals): \$144

\$ _____ Room (without meals): \$91

\$ _____ Kitchenette use: \$20

The kitchenette is only available to those who can't eat provided meals because of health issues.

\$ _____ Commuters (meals only): \$75

\$ _____ Optional contribution to TCVC funds (please specify)

_____ Scholarship Fund _____ Operating Fund

\$ _____ TOTAL (payable to TCVC) Enclosed

Please check all that apply..

_____ This is my first TCVC Retreat.

_____ I need a ride. _____ I can give a ride.

_____ I volunteer to host a post-retreat party. (The retreat manager will contact you to confirm.)

_____ I volunteer to help the retreat manager by arranging for flowers in the meditation hall, greeting new people, etc. (The manager will contact you to confirm.)

_____ I would like to volunteer to manage a future TCVC retreat.

_____ This is a new address or phone number.

TCVC RESIDENTIAL RETREAT CALENDAR

The Twin Cities Vipassana Cooperative offers residential retreats to anyone interested in Vipassana Dhamma practice, which includes the cultivation of mindfulness, equanimity, compassion and loving kindness for all beings.

Date/Time	Leadership	Location	Contact
Sept. 30 to Oct. 4, 1998	Wes Nisker	Tau Center, Winona	Linda Hall, 228-0440
Jan. 22 to 26, 1999	Marcia Rose	Assisi Community Center, Rochester	Vera Matich, 317-8668
April 9 to 13, 1999	Bhante Rahula	Tau Center, Winona	TBD
June 11 to 20, 1999	Kamala Masters & Steve Armstrong	Assisi Community Center, Rochester	TBD
October, 1999	Eugene Cash	Tau Center, Winona	TBD

 **INFOLINE 229-3139** is a TCVC service that offers updates on TCVC-sponsored retreat opportunities and some general information about TCVC and Vipassana practice.

For more information, see **Buddhism in the Twin Cities on the Internet** at <http://freenet.msp.mn.us/people/angelus/buddhism/top.html>

Twin Cities Vipassana Cooperative
P.O. Box 14683
Minneapolis, MN 55414