

# CLEAR MIND



## Breathing into Mindfulness, Serenity, & Insight: Domains of Experience and Understanding

Residential Meditation Retreat with Santikaro, October 8–11, 2015

Madison Vipassana is delighted that Santikaro will lead our annual fall residential retreat October 8–11.

Santikaro and his wife Jo Marie care for Liberation Park, a Buddhist Dhamma refuge in the northern reaches of the Kickapoo watershed. From this base, Santikaro teaches Early Buddhism and meditation around the Midwest and internationally, with an emphasis on using the original discourses to think and see more clearly into our postmodern American challenges and biases. For many years he lived as a Buddhist monk in southern Thailand, as a student and translator of Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu. In recent years, his practice has incorporated treatment for and recovery from cancer. He also works with the Enneagram and 12-step programs. Currently, he is exploring how Buddha-Dhamma can aid in



confronting and unraveling the racism that pervades our society.

The theme of this retreat will be mindfulness with breathing. Flowing within the living body, the breath is a vehicle for mindfulness, calm centeredness, and clear seeing in all areas of life. This retreat will guide meditators in following the breath-based practices advocated by the Buddha for exploring our experiences of body, feeling, awareness, and nature.

Both beginners and experienced practitioners are welcome at this silent meditation retreat. In addition to guided meditations and instruction, ample opportunities will be offered for personal exploration while sitting and walking and for personal practice questions. Supplemental practices will be suggested as needed.

The retreat will be held at Pine Lake Retreat Center in Westfield, Wisconsin. Situated on beautiful Pine Lake, the center is surrounded by rolling hills, farms, and oak savannas. The 400-acre property offers a number of lovely walking trails.

Registration fees cover room, simple vegetarian meals, and other retreat expenses. The cost is \$270 for a double room and \$450 for a single. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings. However, a donation (*dāna*) to the teacher is encouraged.

To register for the retreat, complete the registration form at the back of this newsletter. Early registration is encouraged to ensure a spot. Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program.

For a taste of Santikaro's teachings, see page 2. To learn more about Santikaro and Jo Marie's Dhamma refuge, visit the [Liberation Park website](#). ❖



Pine Lake

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Drinking the nourishment,  
the flavor,  
of seclusion & calm,  
one is freed from evil, devoid  
of distress,  
refreshed with the nourishment  
of rapture in the Dhamma.

—Dhammapada 205  
(Thanissaro Bhikkhu, transl.)

# Taking the Buddha's Anapanasati Seriously

By Santikaro

The first meditation instruction I received was to be mindful of breathing, which I then practiced on and off during my Peace Corps years in the early 1980s. I also read the English translation of Ajahn Buddhadasa's major work on mindfulness with breathing (*anāpānasati*) but had difficulty converting it into my own practice. So I stuck with following the breathing in and out, usually at the nostrils.

After becoming a monk in 1985 and going to live at Suan Mokkh, Ajahn Buddhadasa's "Garden of Liberation," I had the opportunity to practice mindfulness with breathing more consistently under the guidance of Ajahn Poh, who looked after foreigners, and Sariputta, a French-Vietnamese monk who had practiced *ānāpānasati* for years in Sri Lanka. Concurrently, I studied the background teachings and theory.

Within a year I was asked to lead monthly 10-day retreats. With Ajahn Buddhadasa's direction, I helped teach *ānāpānasati* in robust detail and subsequently spent many years explaining it to thousands of new and old meditators. This was a wonderfully fruitful challenge to my own practice and understanding. Throughout that period I interviewed Ajahn Buddhadasa extensively about mindfulness with breathing, my practical difficulties, and the questions of retreatants.

These early exposures created a familiarity with the Buddha's own primary meditation system as represented in the Pāli suttas. I learned that *ānāpānasati* was fundamental to the Buddha's own practice and awakening. This inspires me still. As Ajahn Buddhadasa often said, if we wish to experience what the Buddha experienced, we ought to

live and practice as he did. Even at great distance in time and culture, we can make reasonable approximations of his pioneering explorations. I remain dedicated to exploring the full range of *ānāpānasati*.



Thus, I was somewhat baffled to learn how little the Buddha's own meditation practice was taken seriously, whether in the nominally Theravāda countries of Southeast Asia or the Vipassana diaspora in the West. Subsequent historical studies have helped me accept that such developments are typical among spiritual traditions. While respecting the nowadays better known vipassanā techniques from Burma and their Western therapeutic progeny, I remain a happy and dedicated practitioner of mindfulness with breathing. I continue to inquire into what the Buddha was pointing to. And why. And how to practically realize its fruits.

Some highlights: *Ānāpānasati* is the Buddha's most recommended form of *satipaṭṭhāna* (establishments of mindfulness), providing a more

subtle explanation of *satipaṭṭhāna* than most people realize. It is the most sophisticated and natural way to cultivate mindfulness and the other factors of awakening. Arguably, it has the best credentials for claiming to be the Buddha's own vipassanā practice. It aims steadily for true understanding (the antidote for ignorance) and liberation from clinging (the cure for suffering).

Please allow me to ask blunt but pressing questions. Are we aspiring to the end of dukkha in this life? Are we deferring liberation to some unspecified future? Are we trying to manage our suffering in order to get by without making serious commitments and sacrifices? Do we take the Buddha's teaching and aspiration seriously? If we take the teaching seriously and aspire to that highest potential, should we employ the means he suggested?

Following upon these questions, I further ask how we today can make the most of this wonderful teaching. As with all of the practices currently being taught here in North America, the two millennia-old sutta teaching of *ānāpānasati* is more an outline than a detailed "how-to" manual. Perhaps this is why it is often simplified to "just follow the breath" or "focus on the sensations at the tip of the nostrils." While useful and by no means "wrong," approaches such as these were taught before the Buddha's Awakening and are not the Buddha's *ānāpānasati*. On the other hand, over the centuries scholar-teachers compiled a huge body of commentarial details and elaborations, much of it densely technical. Where influenced by the later Abhidhamma literature, it can be rather arcane. Might there be a middle way?

Respecting ānāpānasati's venerable and lofty pedigree, Ajahn Buddhādāsa sifted through, compiled, and refined the commentarial material concerning the 16 trainings or domains of ānāpānasati. That was the basis of what I learned from him. I also translated some of it into English. Yet, having taught this approach for close to 30 years, I must admit that many retreatants find it daunting. Perhaps it's the style of the suttas and traditional commentaries, perhaps even that of the modern masters of Theravāda. Whatever the case, further reframing seems necessary.

Sixteen domains of experience are organized around the four establishments of mindfulness and map areas for lifelong exploration. We can return to them repeatedly, daily, throughout life as the spiritual faculties mature. Inspired by Ajahn Buddhādāsa's approach to practice, I've refused to see any of the 16 as beyond my or anyone else's ability. I've enjoyed experimenting with bridges helping the people I meet on retreat, in classes, and in sitting groups to connect with the wonderful system of practice outlined by the Buddha. If we take his aspiration seriously and are inspired by his means of realizing it, how might we sink our teeth into those trainings and practices? How do we start where we are in contemplative life and evolve toward awakened freedom? I've experimented with ways to link each domain with down-to-earth meditative experience. Fortunately, we have accessible experiences that open doors to each of the 16 domains. I've been calling these "entryways." On this retreat I will offer the most salient of them.

For example, the fifth domain is "experiencing rapture" (*pīti*). How might one find a toehold in this domain, begin to explore it, and then become familiar enough so that

Are we aspiring to the end of dukkha in this life? Do we take the Buddha's teaching and aspiration seriously? If we take the teaching seriously and aspire to that highest potential, should we employ the means he suggested?

deepening understanding and insight unfold? My suggestion is to take any source of pleasure connected with healthy, mindful breathing and savor it. As we allow the breathing to be relaxed and natural, it easily becomes a source of pleasure without any intention for it to be so. The calm, effortless ease is pleasurable. The way it feels in the body is pleasurable. The lack of strain is pleasurable. Gather in this pleasurableness until it becomes the primary object of awareness, even while the breathing flows in the background. Through positive feedback loops, this pleasure stabilizes and expands. It may intensify and purify, becoming rapture. Now one is experiencing rapture, and a fascinating domain of inquiry opens.

Through a simple bridging mechanism that's available in normal practice, one has the opportunity to contemplate something of great significance—*pīti*, the fourth factor of awakening. Ordinary pleasure is a sufficient beginning, so long as it's wholesome. With patient observation, a relaxed attitude, non-grasping, and creativity, everyone can find something suitable for awakening rapture.

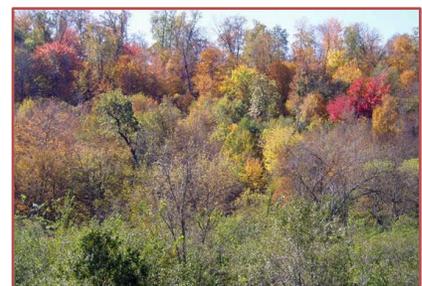
Or take the ninth domain, "experiencing mind." Wherever we go, whatever we do, "there" is mind. What sort of stuff is "mind"? This question is central to vipassanā. To begin approaching it we can observe

the thoughts, memories, and images that arise almost continuously. All meditators notice them. Instead of being annoyed or bothered by them, mindfully notice the content of the thoughts, then shift emphasis to the tone, feel, quality, or coloring of awareness that experiences them. Pay attention to the way awareness is shaped rather than the story shaping it. This is subtle and slippery. Nevertheless, as we are less caught up in the meaning, value, pleasure, or threat of such things, we have increasing glimpses into "mind." As mindfulness rests more on the awareness side of experience, practice opens up to the contemplation of mind.

This "entryway" principle can be applied throughout the 16 domains. Thus, the entire range of this practice can be accessed, even the seemingly lofty domains of "contemplating impermanence" (13) and "contemplating quenching" (15). As impermanence and quenching are everyday facts, they can be found right here in the present moment as we learn how to watch and look while breathing in and out. How deep the process will go depends on the strength of spiritual faculties.

During the retreat at Pine Lake, I will share such skillful tricks and help you put them into practice. I hope the entire system of the Buddha's ānāpānasati will thus become more accessible and profoundly available, for the sake of freedom from egoism and its suffering. ❖

More articles on ānāpānasati can be found on the [Liberation Park website](#).



Autumn at Liberation Park

# Getting Unstuck

By Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

*(This brief article is a slightly expanded version of an email message that Jan sent to those who had attended one of the MIMG Tuesday evening meditation sessions. It was intended to follow up on a conversation that had occurred the evening before.)*

All of us have had the experience at some point in our practice of thinking “my meditation isn’t working,” “I’m not getting it,” or “something is wrong.” When this occurs, we often think there is something wrong with the practice, with the instructions, or with me. But in fact, the problem is not the practice or ourselves, but is due to the attitude we bring to the meditation.

If the mind and the body are getting tired, something is wrong with the way you are practicing, and it is time to check the way you are meditating.

You are not trying to make things turn out the way you want them to happen. You are trying to know what is happening as it is.<sup>1</sup>

And what is it we want to know about what is happening?

... always remember, whenever there’s a problem, that more attention is required. In particular, you have to pay more careful attention to what’s happening in terms of the issue of stress [*dukkha*] and its causes.<sup>2</sup>

The attention that is called for is what the Buddha called *yoniso manasikara*, wise reflection or appropriate attention. Appropriate attention is not the kind of attention that is focused on me and my wants, but is attention that is skillful and not deluded.

Here are three suggestions for how to shift unskillful, inappropriate attention to skillful, appropriate

attention so as to clarify the “problem,” identify the source of the craving, and lead the body and mind toward greater ease.

1. *Depersonalize it.* Is this only your problem? Has it ever happened before in the history of the universe? Is it an aberration of nature? Asking questions like these helps you step back and see the situation not as *your* personal, special, problem but as something that happens in this human realm and to human beings, you included.

You are not trying to make things turn out the way you want them to happen. You are trying to know what is happening as it is.

2. *Cultivate an attitude of genuine (infinite) goodwill.* Start by noticing any ill-will that is present. It may be directed toward yourself and your “failing” or directed toward someone else. Ill-will is a source of constriction, defensiveness, fear, anxiety, and restlessness. Until it is acknowledged for what it is, and relaxed, the body and mind will not be able to settle on the meditation object. Bring to mind the millions of people before you who have experienced similar problems. Wish them well, and recognize that if you can wish them well, you can also wish yourself well. You’re not the only one who has suffered. Wishing all of those others well, not wishing *anyone* ill, means you include yourself in the whole experience of well-wishing.

3. *Recognize what is being added to the problem by your thoughts about it.*

Remember the Buddha’s teaching on [The Two Arrows of Pain](#). The first arrow is the actual pain. The second and subsequent arrows we shoot into ourselves by our reaction to the pain. These extra arrows are often the majority of the suffering we experience. If there’s an attitude of “it shouldn’t be like this,” notice how clinging to that idea about how it should be adds to the pain. It doesn’t matter how it “should” be; this is how it is right now. Can you bring goodwill, generosity, and non-delusion to how it really is? This is not suggesting that we repress or stuff our emotions. It doesn’t ask that we change the emotions we feel. Instead it is about our relationship to what we are feeling. It is about bringing an attitude of goodwill, patience, and clarity even if the emotions that are present are ill-will, impatience, and confusion. If we can be genuinely willing to offer kindness, mindfulness, and interest toward what is going on in the body and mind, the resistance and struggle in the meditation will release.

When we can practice these three steps, we create the conditions for wisdom and the ending of greed, hatred, and delusion. With these conditions in place, suffering has no ground, it isn’t being fed, and it can cease. When we starve greed, hatred, and delusion in this way, we are feeding what the Buddha called the seven factors of awakening—mindfulness (*sati*), analysis of qualities (*dhamma vicaya*), energy (*viriya*), refreshment (*pīti*), serenity (*passaddhi*), unification of mind (*samādhi*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*)—and as a result they are what will grow and become stronger. ❖

<sup>1</sup> Ashin Tejaniya, “[What Is the Right Attitude for Meditation?](#)”

<sup>2</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “[When Things Aren’t Going Well](#)” (Nov. 14, 2008). In “Meditations 5: Dhamma Talks.”

## Introduction to Meditation

Madison Insight Meditation Group offers an introduction to meditation the second Sunday of each month from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Those who come for the introduction have time together with a leader, in a room of their own, to introduce themselves and learn some of the fundamentals of sitting and walking meditation.

These monthly introductory sessions are open to everyone. If you have not meditated before, we invite you to attend one of them. If you have meditated previously and feel at ease meditating for a 45-minute period, you are welcome to come to any of our three sitting groups (see below). We hope you will join us soon! ❖

## MIMG Sitting Groups

Madison Insight Meditation Group offers three weekly meditation opportunities, one in central Madison, one on the west side, and one on the east side. Bring your own meditation cushion or bench if you have one. Chairs and some extra cushions are available. Details are below.

**Central: Sundays 6:00–8:00 p.m.**

**First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays:** 45-minute sitting followed by talk and discussion

**2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays:** 45-minute sitting, 20-minute walking meditation, 45-minute sitting (breakout group on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays offers introduction to insight meditation)

This sitting group is peer-led.

**East: Through 9/7: Mondays 7:30–9:00 p.m.**

**Beginning 9/18: Fridays 7:30–9:00 p.m.**

**Main Street Yoga, 1882 E. Main Street, Madison**

30-minute sitting followed by 10-minute movement meditation and Dhamma discussion or talk

This sitting group is led by Devon Hase, Craig Hase, and Jack Arpin. Devon completed the Community Dharma Leader training at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Craig has been studying in the American vipassana tradition for a number of years. Jack ordained and lived in a Thai Forest monastery.

**West: Tuesdays 6:30–8:15 p.m.**

**9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton (directions on [website](#))**

45-minute sitting followed by Dhamma discussion

This sitting group is led by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, who was trained at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery as a Buddhist Lay Minister, and at Spirit Rock Meditation Center as a Community Dharma Leader.

## Kalyana Mitta Groups

A *Kalyana Mitta* (*spiritual friend* in Pāli) is a group of 8–12 individuals who gather periodically to study and discuss the teachings of the Buddha and his path of practice. Each group determines how frequently to meet, what to read, and how to structure the sessions. Madison Insight Meditation Group gathers the names of those interested, and when there are enough people for a new group, they are notified and assisted in getting the group started. Once established, each Kalyana Mitta manages on its own. Individuals interested in joining a Kalyana Mitta should send an email to Dave at [davecres@charter.net](mailto:davecres@charter.net). ❖

## Upcoming Half-Day Sits

Madison Insight Meditation Group will hold half-day sits on Saturday, September 5, and Saturday, December 19, at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, in Madison.

Our half-day sits begin at 9:00 a.m. (try to arrive a little early), and the formal practice ends at about noon. Three 45-minute sitting periods alternate with two 20-minute walking periods. If you can't attend for the entire morning, feel free to come for a portion of it. Plan to arrive just a little before the hour so you can join the last few minutes of walking and stay for the next sitting period.

The morning's practice is followed by a potluck lunch in the same location. Bring something to share if you can, but come anyway if you can't. Questions can be directed to Dave or Lori at (608) 238-1234. There is no fee or registration required. Everyone is invited. ❖



## Save the Date!

### 20<sup>th</sup>-Anniversary Sangha-Wide Picnic!

Madison Insight Meditation Group will host a sangha-wide picnic in September in celebration of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Join us for delicious food, conversation, and fun. Bring your family and friends! Learn a bit more about how MIMG is governed and run. Bring a dish or game to share or just bring yourself—there will be plenty!

**When:** Sunday, September 13, 11:30–1:30 p.m.

**Where:** Rennebohm Park, 115 North Eau Claire Ave., Madison, WI 53705

RSVP would be appreciated, but is not required. Please contact Joy to RSVP or ask any questions at [joyknox1@gmail.com](mailto:joyknox1@gmail.com). ❖

## Upcoming Retreats

**Santikaro, October 8–11, 2015**

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

**Ajahn Sucitto, June 5–9, 2016**

Christine Center, Willard, WI (residential)

**Sharon Salzberg, August 12–14, 2016**

Lussier Family Heritage Center, Madison, WI (nonresidential)

**James Baraz, October 27–30, 2016**

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

## Upcoming Meditation Classes

Taught by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard  
Classes at 9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton, WI

**Training the Mind: An Introduction to Meditation**

Four Thursdays, September 10–October 1, 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

**Clearing the Path: Continuing and Deepening Your Meditation**

Five Thursdays, October 15–November 12, 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.

Details at [madisonmeditation.org/classes.html](http://madisonmeditation.org/classes.html).

## CLEAR MIND

The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Madison, WI

This newsletter is published periodically as a service to our meditation community. It is available on our website at: [madisonmeditation.org](http://madisonmeditation.org)

Cathy Loeb: Editor

Janice Sheppard: Contributing writer

To subscribe, send an empty message to: [mimg-subscribe@yahogroups.com](mailto:mimg-subscribe@yahogroups.com)



# Breathing into Mindfulness, Serenity, & Insight: Domains of Experience and Understanding

A Residential Meditation Retreat with

**Santikaro**

October 8–11, 2015

4:30 P.M. Thursday until 1:00 P.M. Sunday

Pine Lake Camp, Westfield, WI

Sponsored by Madison Vipassana, Inc. ([madisonmeditation.org](http://madisonmeditation.org))

The theme of this retreat will be mindfulness with breathing. Flowing within the living body, the breath is a vehicle for mindfulness, calm centeredness, and clear seeing in all areas of life. This retreat will guide meditators in following the breath-based practices advocated by the Buddha for exploring our experiences of body, feeling, awareness, and nature.

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## Cost

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## Financial assistance

Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. Individuals may receive scholarships multiple times. Please ask if you need assistance. Contact Lori at [loricres@charter.net](mailto:loricres@charter.net) or (608) 238-1234 to discuss how we can help.

## Special needs

To inquire about special situations, contact Ann at [registrar.madvip@yahoo.com](mailto:registrar.madvip@yahoo.com) or (608) 843-7531. Please note that we are unable to accommodate special dietary needs.

## Ride sharing

To request or to offer a ride to the retreat, contact Beth at [bracette@gmail.com](mailto:bracette@gmail.com) or (608) 239-9790.

## Registration

Early registration is encouraged. Registration is on a space-available basis and must include the registration form on the next page and a check to reserve your spot. Confirmation will be by email and will include information on the facility, driving directions, and recommendations on what to bring. If the retreat is full, you will be placed on a waiting list. Those on the waiting list who do not get a spot will receive a full refund. For questions about registration, contact Ann at [registrar.madvip@yahoo.com](mailto:registrar.madvip@yahoo.com) or (608) 843-7531.

## Cancellation and refund policy

All cancellations are subject to a nonrefundable \$70 fee. Cancellations received on or before September 10 will be refunded the retreat fee less \$70. Refunds, less \$70, will be given to those canceling after September 10 only if there is another person wanting to register for the retreat.

## To register

Send the registration form with a check for the full amount (payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc.) to:

**Madison Vipassana, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 258101**

**Madison, WI 53725**

Madison Vipassana, Inc.  
**Residential Meditation Retreat with Santikaro**  
October 8-11, 2015

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Registration Form – Please Print Clearly  
Checks payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Indicate whether you wish to register for a double or a single room. Make checks payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Double room (\$270)       Single room (\$450)

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

To help us in setting up the Dhamma hall, please indicate whether you prefer to sit primarily on the floor or in a chair. We will have extra chairs, but not enough to reserve both a chair and a place on the floor.

Floor       Chair

Would you like to use one of our assistive listening devices?  Yes    No

Do you have any other special needs?  Yes    No

If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first vipassana retreat?  Yes    No

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose an additional \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to be used for scholarships.

*Send your completed registration form with a check for the full amount to:*

**Madison Vipassana, Inc.  
P.O. Box 258101  
Madison, WI 53725**