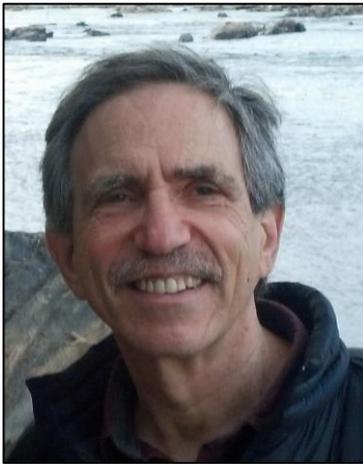


CLEAR MIND



Residential Retreat with James Baraz: Oct. 27–30, 2016



James Baraz will lead a residential meditation retreat for the Madison Insight Meditation Group community October 27–30. James has been coming to Wisconsin to share the teachings with us for many years now, and we're delighted to welcome him back.

James has been teaching meditation since 1978. He leads retreats, workshops, and classes in the U.S. and abroad and is a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. He started the Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leader program, which trains serious practitioners to teach meditation in their communities, and he is teacher-advisor to the Spirit Rock family and

teen programs. He serves on the advisory board of [One Earth Sangha](#), a website and forum devoted to Dharma and climate change. James leads ongoing meditation classes in Berkeley, California, where he lives with his wife.

The theme of the October retreat will be *Awakening Joy*. James has offered his popular online Awakening Joy course since 2003, and in 2010 he published a book based on the course, *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You on the Road to Real Happiness* (co-authored with Shoshana Alexander). *Awakening Joy for Kids* (co-authored with Michele Lilyanna) has just been published.

In Buddhism, joy is both a factor of enlightenment and one of the four divine abodes. Today, as we are bombarded with messages that heighten our fear and sadness about the world, more than ever it is vital to understand the importance of joy as a central aspect of spiritual practice. We need to remember how to stay connected to that place inside that makes life worth living. Our own cultivation of well-being and joy can become our gift to a troubled world.

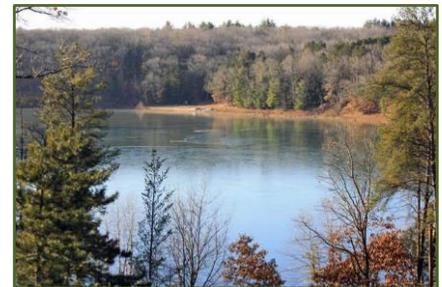
The retreat will be suitable for both beginning and experienced students of meditation. Sitting meditation periods will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. The retreat will be held in silence except for instructions, question-and-answer periods, group interviews, and Dhamma talks.

The retreat will be held at the 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.

The cost of this residential retreat is \$325 for a double room and \$470 for a single. Registration fees cover room, simple vegetarian meals, teacher transportation, and other retreat expenses. 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 sample of James Baraz's teachings, see [page 2](#) or sample any of more than 500 talks available free of charge on the [Dharma Seed website](#). To learn more about James, please visit his [website](#). ❖



Pine Lake

Impermanent truly are compound things,
by nature arising and passing away.
If they arise and are extinguished,
their eradication brings happiness.
— Dīgha Nikāya 2.221

James Baraz: When It Comes to Happiness, Don't Go for a Gusher

We live in a competitive culture where more is often assumed to be better. This is true especially in the United States where being Number One, winning at all costs, and “having the most” are deeply ingrained in the psyche as real success. Unfortunately, many other countries have emulated this mindset as the way to be. (In a world of finite resources this model is, of course, unsustainable, and ultimately a sure prescription for major problems down the road. But that's another article.)

The model of going for maximum results is often erroneously applied to our own well-being. People often mistakenly look for intense delight as a measure that their attempt at awakening joy is truly successful. When we look for bells and whistles as indications of true happiness we're misunderstanding a very important principle: Setting a high bar of intense happiness works against true well-being. Although I'm all for being present for peak experiences when they arise, trying to create them or measuring that ideal against a modest level of “okayness” will render this moment “not good enough.”

One of my favorite Calvin and Hobbes cartoons starts off with a smiling Calvin saying, “Here I am happy and content.” The next frame he thinks to himself: “But not euphoric.” Third frame: “So I'm no

longer content. My day is completely ruined.” Last frame: “I should have stopped thinking while I was ahead.”

When we look for bells and whistles as indications of true happiness we're misunderstanding a very important principle: Setting a high bar of intense happiness works against true well-being.

When people do my Awakening Joy course, they often have ideas of what joy is supposed to look like. A complaint I sometimes hear is, “I'm trying *really hard* to be joyful and it's not working.” That kind of efforting to be joyful will only lead to frustration! Instead, I recommend that one simply begin to notice moments of feeling okay. For those who tend to have lives of intense drama, I suggest being aware of moments when they're *not miserable*. That's a good start.

We find what we look for. Neuroscience calls this phenomenon a *confirmation bias*. The brain will see what it believes to be true and will miss whatever doesn't confirm its hypothesis. If we doubt we will ever experience our imagined ideal of true happiness—peak experiences of ecstasy—we will continually confirm that skepticism.

However, if we see moments of

“okayness”—moments when we're not suffering—as moments worthy of appreciation, we open the channel to true well-being. And the more we notice and take them in, the stronger that flow of true well-being naturally becomes—not through force but through wise attention. As neuroscience expert (and Awakening Joy presenter) Rick Hanson says: “The brain is like Teflon for positive experiences and Velcro for negative ones.”

When you let go of looking for ecstatic states, you can find joy in the most commonplace moments. Edith, an Awakening Joy participant in Germany, had somehow equated joy with intense positive experiences. But when she stopped looking for those and simply opened up to a simple feeling of well-being she started to experience things very differently.

I noticed how much joy there already *is* and how I had somehow looked for a kind of supermundane, “spiritual” joy, more profound and lasting than our ordinary joy, that I would only reach if I practiced hard and in the right way. By having this concept, and by looking for this other kind of joy, I had missed out on a lot of “ordinary joy” moments. As I focused on them, appreciated them and felt them more fully, I was so happy and sometimes almost overwhelmed at all the joy and blessings in my life.

(cont'd on next page)

Additional Opportunities to Practice with James Baraz

James Baraz will lead Madison Insight Meditation Group's regular Sunday night meditation on October 30, 2016, at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. The evening will begin at 6:00 p.m. with a 45-minute sitting, following which James will offer a Dharma talk. The First Unitarian Society is sponsoring its own public talk with James on Wednesday, October 26, at 7:00 p.m. in the Landmark Auditorium. If you can't attend the retreat, these are great opportunities to benefit from James's teaching.

(“When It Comes to Happiness,” cont’d)

I remember many years ago hearing a wise teacher give instructions on the meditation practice called loving-kindness or *metta*. He said that sometimes the word *loving-kindness* can seem so lofty and noble that we imagine it’s beyond our reach. He suggested connecting with a simple feeling of *kindness* or *friendliness* towards oneself or others. That’s so much more accessible and it will start the flow of good-heartedness we’re looking for.

In the Buddhist model of happiness, refined states of well-being are ultimately more sustainable and more satisfying. As wonderful as it is, rapture is considered a coarser level of happiness that, after a while, becomes jangling to the system. Gladness, then happiness, followed by contentment are considered much more developed and fulfilling. Finally, deep peace is the most satisfying state of all and is said to be the precursor to true enlightenment.

So if you’re trying to cultivate genuine happiness within yourself, you might consider letting go of trying to experience a gusher of intensity. Awakening joy comes naturally from truly appreciating the simple moments of well-being in our lives. ❖

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

1st & 3rd Sundays: 45-minute sitting followed by talk and discussion

2nd, 4th, & 5th Sundays: 45-minute sitting, 20-minute walking meditation, 45-minute sitting (breakout group on 2nd Sundays offers introduction to insight meditation—see below)

This sitting group is peer-led.

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.

East: 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.



Introduction to Insight 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 separate room, to introduce themselves, learn some of the fundamentals of sitting and walking meditation, and hear a bit about our group and its history.

These monthly introductory sessions are open to everyone. If you have not meditated before, we invite you to attend one of them. Everyone is also welcome to attend any of our three sitting groups (see above). We hope you’ll join us! ❖

The Dhamma of Contentment

Luang Por Pasanno

Contentment is a good theme for all of us to consider. In doing so we want to learn how to be content with the circumstances around us, as well as with our own minds, internally.

Most of the agitation, negativity, and fault-finding that the mind cranks out is not so much about any big event that's happening outside. Almost invariably, it is a lack of internal contentment. When the mind is internally unable to find contentment, externally it finds something to be excited about, upset about, agitated about, or have an opinion about. It's usually really believable! We come up with the logic and all of the good reasons to justify our states of mind. There are plenty of good reasons if we look for them. But oftentimes, what's overlooked is the question, *Why can't I be content with this present moment, with this circumstance, with my mind and feelings as they are?*

This is a very important investigation. It's a fundamental basis for progress in practice. Until we

learn how to direct our attention in that way, we're almost always driven by discontent and end up being caught up in some sort of sensual fantasy or internal rant or something that, at the very least, takes us out of the present moment. The challenge is to be able to draw attention to what's arising and investigate: *How can I be content with this present moment? How can I be content with myself?*

When the Buddha talked about being a refuge unto ourselves and taking Dhamma as a refuge, he didn't mean that we take refuge in the Dhamma of discontent. Our refuge is in the Dhamma of contentment, the ability to not be pulled away from the present moment. This is absolutely essential when we're talking about meditation—for the mind to become settled, peaceful, and still, we need to have the ability to be content with the breath or some other meditation object. In the suttas, the Buddha describes contentment as one of the characteristics of a great being or a

noble one, an *ariya*. We [monks] learn to be content with our robes, alms food, lodging, and with our cultivation, our development of meditation. This aspect of contentment is a fruitful area for investigation. We can experiment with it and find ways to draw our hearts closer to that quality. ❖

—Reprinted from *Beginning Our Day: Dhamma Reflections from Abhayagiri Monastery, Vol. 1* (2015), pp. 239–240.



Half-Day Sit

Madison Insight Meditation Group will hold a half-day sit on Saturday, October 15, in the Gaebler Living Room 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. 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 Tony at (608) 231-1558. There is no fee or registration required. Everyone is invited.

Upcoming Retreats

Mark Nunberg, March 17–19, 2017

Holy Wisdom Monastery, Madison, WI
(residential/nonresidential)

Ayyā Medhānandī, May 21–25, 2017

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI
(residential)

DaRa Williams, October 5–8, 2017

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI
(residential)

Sangha Picnic — September 25!

You asked us to repeat last fall's successful sangha-wide picnic, and we listened! Join us on Sunday, September 25, 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 to share or just bring yourself—there will be plenty to eat!

When: Sunday, September 25, 11:30–1:30 p.m.

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

RSVPs are appreciated but not required. Please contact Chris at Cbkeenan44@gmail.com or (716) 997-9361 to RSVP or ask any questions. ❖

Join Us on Facebook!

Check out the [Madison Insight Meditation Group \(MIMG\) Facebook page!](#) Be sure to click “Like” to have us show up in your newsfeed. We’re using the page to post announcements about upcoming MIMG events such as retreats, classes, and special guest speakers. If you attend one of our [weekly meditation groups](#), this is a good way to learn what else is happening at the other groups and in the broader MIMG community. We may also occasionally post inspiring Dhamma quotations. If you have a photograph or reflections about our retreats or other events, please consider sending them by messaging the page directly—we’d love to post them!



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.

If you’re interested in joining a Kalyana Mitta, email Jan Sheppard at janice.sheppard@yahoo.com. ❖

Madison Dharma Community

Did you know Madison has a citywide sangha email list? The Madison Dharma Community list is intended for all Dharma practitioners in the greater Madison area.

The list serves as a resource for anybody hoping to get the word out on Dharma-related news and requests to the widest possible group of interested practitioners. It’s a place to post notices about retreats and other practice opportunities, as well as more personal items, such as “practitioner roommate wanted” or “house available for rent.” It also offers an opportunity for inter-sangha discussions about practice.

Subscribing to the list is fast and, of course, free. Just go to [this link](#) and click on “Join Group.” The list is set up as a Google Group, but you don’t need a Google account to join. The list is lightly moderated to prevent spam.

May the Madison Dharma Community list be of benefit to everyone on the path!

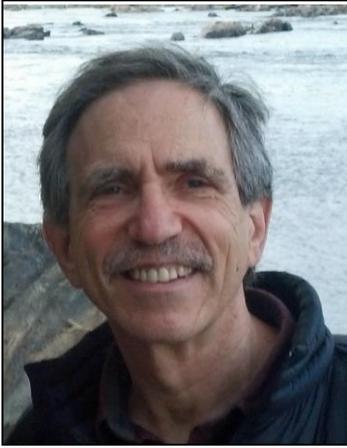
CLEAR MIND

The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc.
Madison, WI

This newsletter is published periodically as a service to our meditation community and is available on our [website](#).

Cathy Loeb: Editor

To subscribe, send an empty message to: mimg-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



Residential Meditation Retreat with James Baraz

October 27–30, 2016

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

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI

Sponsored by Madison Vipassana, Inc.

James Baraz has been teaching meditation since 1978. He leads retreats, workshops, and classes in the U.S. and abroad and is a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. He started the Spirit Rock Community Dharma Leader program, which trains serious practitioners to teach meditation in their communities, and he is teacher-advisor to the Spirit Rock family and teen programs.

The theme of this retreat will be *Awakening Joy*. James has offered his popular online Awakening Joy course since 2003, and in 2010 he published a book based on the course, *Awakening Joy: 10 Steps That Will Put You on the Road to Real Happiness* (co-authored with Shoshana Alexander). *Awakening Joy for Kids* (co-authored with Michele Lilyanna) has just been published. In Buddhism, joy is both a factor of enlightenment and one of the four divine abodes. Today, as we are bombarded with messages that heighten our fear and sadness about the world, more than ever it is vital to understand the importance of joy as a central aspect of spiritual practice. We need to remember how to stay connected to that place inside that makes life worth living. Our own cultivation of well-being and joy can become our gift to a troubled world.

The retreat will be suitable for both beginning and experienced students of meditation. Sitting meditation periods will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. The retreat will be held in silence except for instructions, question-and-answer periods, group interviews, and Dhamma talks.

Cost

The cost of this residential retreat is \$325 for a double room and \$470 for a single. Registration fees cover room, simple vegetarian meals, teacher transportation, and other retreat expenses. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings. However, a donation (*dāna*) to the teacher is encouraged.

Financial assistance

Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. Individuals may receive scholarships multiple times. Please ask if you need assistance. Contact Ann at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or (608) 843-7531 to discuss how we can help.

Special needs

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

Ride sharing

To request or offer rides to and from the retreat center, contact Chris at Cbkeenan44@gmail.com or (716) 997-9361.

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 provide 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 or (608) 843-7531.

Cancellation and refund policy

All cancellations are subject to a nonrefundable \$80 fee. Cancellations received on or before September 30 will be refunded the retreat fee less \$80. Refunds, less \$80, will be given to those canceling after September 30 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. c/o Ann Varda
1724 Hoyt St.
Madison, WI 53726

Madison Vipassana, Inc.
Residential Meditation Retreat with James Baraz

October 27-30, 2016

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI

— Registration Form ♦ Please Print Clearly —

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Alternate Phone _____
Email _____

Room preferences . . .

Gender (optional): _____

Indicate whether you wish to register for a double or a single room:

Double room (\$325) Single room (\$470)

Single rooms are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. If we are not able to accommodate your request for a single room, please indicate whether we should:

Place you on a waiting list for a single room. Place you in a double room.

Special circumstances or requests . . .

I snore. I use a CPAP or other medical device.

I would like to use to an assistive listening device. (If you have questions about our assistive listening devices, please contact Mike Kehl at mike.fiddlehead@gmail.com or 608-334-0611.)

If you have any other special needs, requests, or information to share with us, please explain below or contact the registrar, Ann Varda, at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or 608-843-7531. _____

Sitting preferences . . .

To help us set 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.

Chair Floor

We will have just a few extra meditation cushions available to borrow during the retreat, so if you plan to sit on the floor, please bring your own cushion or bench if you have one.

A few last details and a request for help with setup and cleanup . . .

This is my first vipassana retreat.

I can arrive by 2:30 p.m. on Oct. 27 to help with setup. I can help clean up after the retreat.

I can give a ride to ___ passengers from _____ . I need a ride from _____ .

I enclose an additional \$ _____ to be used for scholarships for future retreats.

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

Madison Vipassana, Inc., c/o Ann Varda
1724 Hoyt St.
Madison, WI 53726

Checks payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. Please contact the registrar, Ann Varda, at registrar.madvip@yahoo.com or 608-843-7531 to discuss how we can help.