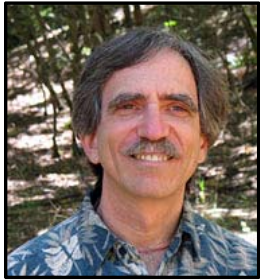


CLEAR MIND



Residential Retreat with James Baraz, October 10–13, 2013



Madison Vipassana is thrilled to welcome James Baraz back to Wisconsin to lead a residential

retreat October 10–13 at the Pine Lake Retreat Center in Westfield. We have been very fortunate to have James lead retreats for us every few years for more than a decade. He is an experienced and inspiring teacher known for teachings on awakening joy.

This retreat will be suitable for both beginning and experienced meditators. Clear and simple instructions will be offered throughout the retreat, and a longer talk will be presented each evening. The retreat will be held in silence except for question-and-answer periods. Sitting meditation periods of 45 minutes will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. Pine Lake offers a beautiful and peaceful setting for this wonderful practice opportunity.

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 International Advisory Board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

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). James leads ongoing meditation and Awakening Joy classes in Berkeley, California, where he lives with his wife. His websites are www.awakeningjoy.info and www.jamesbaraz.com.

The cost of the retreat is \$285, which covers a double room, simple vegetarian meals, teacher transportation, and other retreat

expenses. Some single rooms are available on a first-come basis for \$420. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings. However, a donation (*dana*) to the teacher is encouraged.

For details about the retreat and registration, see the enclosed registration form or go to madisonmeditation.org. Early registration is encouraged to ensure a spot. Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program.

For a taste of James's teachings, sample any one of the more than 370 of his talks available free of charge on the Dharma Seed website, www.dharmaseed.org/teacher/86/.



The key to maintaining your inspiration in the day-to-day work of meditation practice is to approach it as play—a happy opportunity to master practical skills, to raise questions, experiment, and explore.

— Thanissaro Bhikkhu
“The Joy of Effort”

Additional Opportunities to Practice with James Baraz

Join Madison Insight Meditation Group at our regular weekly meditation on Sunday, October 13, at 6:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. James Baraz will offer the Dhamma talk that evening. If you can attend his retreat, this will be a delightful way to hear more from James. If you aren't able to attend the retreat, this will give you a chance to benefit from his teaching.

James will also speak at a First Unitarian Society-sponsored event on Tuesday evening, October 15, at 7:00 p.m. The talk is entitled “Being Present for Your Life.”

Awakening Joy Begins with Clear Intention

By James Baraz

As I sat in the class, I could feel a strange and miraculous transformation happening. I had spent a lifetime of yearning for happiness while despairing of ever finding it. And now for the first time, I was believing deep in my heart that change was not only possible but that I could do it. I remember the thrill and aliveness that started coming over me as I let myself imagine having the same relaxed centeredness as this teacher who in some ways was not so different from me.

It was the summer of 1974 and I embarked on an adventure to Boulder, Colorado. I was drawn to a spiritual summer camp called Naropa Institute because of a man named Ram Dass. He had written a book called *Be Here Now*, which I carried with me for years as my lifeline to sanity. When I met him, I asked Ram Dass if he could recommend a teacher from whom to learn meditation. I had tried Transcendental Meditation, a popular practice at the time. I thought if it was good enough for John Lennon, it was good enough for me. But now I was looking for something deeper.

Ram Dass suggested going to a class on meditation and Eastern philosophy taught by Joseph Goldstein, a young teacher who had just come back to the States after years of practice in India. Although Joseph didn't quite fit my image of a spiritual teacher, something about his centeredness and presence touched me deeply. The paradox of his being both not much different outwardly from me yet very different internally was striking. And here he was saying

that it was possible for anyone who was motivated to find inner peace and happiness—even if their mind was filled with neurotic insecurities like mine. Somehow, I believed him.

Buddhist philosophy teaches that intention is the most important determinant of the suffering or happiness we create in our lives. . . .

Whatever motivates you—whether suffering, curiosity, or an inspiring vision—accessing the intention to bring more well-being into your life is the magical ingredient that makes it all happen.

“If he could do it, perhaps I can too,” I thought. *What would it require of me?* I didn't know. But I knew that I had had enough of being lost in confusion. I was going to do whatever it took to find and realize for myself what Joseph had discovered. After a lifetime of searching I had found a path and teacher that could point me in the direction of happiness and peace. And I intended to make it happen.

Buddhist philosophy teaches that intention is the most important determinant of the suffering or happiness we create in our lives. We first need to see clearly the

cause of our suffering and understand where true happiness lies. Then the crucial step in creating true well-being begins with the clear intention to do so. This intention involves getting clear on our vision of what we want to create. More than wishing or hoping for a particular outcome, our intention for awakening joy is a heartfelt decision to do our part to bring about our vision and then allowing life to support us in that unfolding. Clear intention sets the course for our thoughts and steers our actions towards our goal.

Our intention creates what is known in neuroscience as a “confirmation bias.” That is, our brain tends to notice what will support what we're looking for. If you habitually look for how people will disappoint you or how things won't work out, you'll likely notice what confirms your hypothesis. And if you practice seeing the goodness in life, you'll more likely tune into what confirms that perspective.

Even if you get clear on the intention to create true happiness in your life, you may still have thoughts of unworthiness, which block giving this to yourself. Mindfulness helps you realize they are just old habits of mind. Don't let them run your life. The core of you truly wants to be happy. It motivates everything you do. Keep exploring where true happiness lies and practice putting that at the center of your life. Can you get in touch with that intention?

Ask yourself what you envision will bring you a true, sustainable happiness. More than experiences ►

or objects, deeper happiness comes from connecting with what inspires us, what opens our hearts and gives our life meaning. Do you sense what that would be for you? If you can, imagine what it would feel like to embody that vision. Get clear on your intention, your heartfelt decision to do your part to help bring that into reality.

Sometimes people feel that they have too much suffering in their life to open to genuine well-being. Yet, strong motivation often is born out of great suffering. That

was certainly true in my case. When I started my spiritual practice, although I had previously glimpsed the possibility of joy, I was mostly caught in my self-made web of confusion, wanting but not knowing how to find a way out. If you have much suffering in your life and allow the possibility to live with more joy, you might be very motivated to make that change. That intention is the most potent factor to awaken more joy and happiness in your life.

However, you don't have to be in the depths of despair to access sufficient intention to awaken joy. If you sense that there is a greater peace and aliveness to be experienced and your curiosity motivates you to want to make it happen, that will start you on this journey. Whatever motivates you—whether suffering, curiosity, or an inspiring vision—accessing the intention to bring more well-being into your life is the magical ingredient that makes it all happen. ❖



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Close to 400 people subscribe to our print newsletter. Many of these subscribers also subscribe to the MIMG email list, which sends a notice each time a new newsletter issue is posted on the website (madisonmeditation.org/newsletters). We are interested in reducing the number of newsletters that are mailed since we have electronic options readily available. If you're a print subscriber and can help us conserve paper and save costs, please consider forgoing the print version and reading future newsletters online. To remove yourself from the print mailing list, send an email to Cathy at cathy.loeb@gmail.com; please include your full name and address to ensure that we remove the correct person. To subscribe to our email list, send an empty message to mimg-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. The list averages very few messages per month.

Upcoming Events

Retreats

(madisonmeditation.org/retreats)

James Baraz, Oct. 10–13, 2013 (residential)
Pine Lake Center, Westfield, WI

Greg Scharf, Mar. 13–16, 2014 (residential/non-residential)
Holy Wisdom Monastery, Middleton, WI

Sharon Salzberg, July 25–27, 2014 (non-residential)
Lussier Family Heritage Center, Madison, WI

Classes

(madisonmeditation.org/classes)

Clearing the Path: Meditation in Context
Taught by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard
Saturdays, 9:00–11:00 a.m., Sept. 28–Oct. 26, 2013
9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton, WI
Registration details at the web address above

Half-Day Sits

(madisonmeditation.org/activities/other)

August 31, 2013
November 2, 2013
January 18, 2014

Mindful Hearts, Skillful Needles



Mindful Hearts, Skillful Needles is a group for those who practice Buddhist meditation and also practice any of the needle arts. The focus of the group is on deepening and enriching our meditation and understanding of the teachings of the Buddha through reflection on what our handwork teaches us about life and practice, and vice versa.

The group meets from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month in Middleton, Wisconsin, and has open membership. We are eclectic and inclusive in welcoming all varieties of handwork and all Buddhist traditions. However, the group is sponsored by Madison Insight Meditation Group, which practices in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Details are at madisonmeditation.org/activities/other.

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Madison, WI

This newsletter is published periodically as a service to our meditation community. It is also available on our website at:

madisonmeditation.org

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