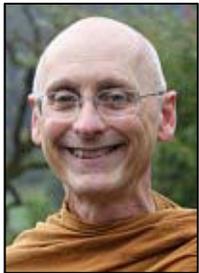


CLEAR MIND



Understanding Obstructions on the Path, and Letting Go Residential Retreat with Ajahn Karunadhammo April 27–May 1, 2015



We are delighted to be bringing Ajahn Karunadhammo back to Wisconsin to lead a residential retreat April 27 to May 1 at Pine Lake Retreat Center in Westfield,

Wisconsin. This will be our second opportunity to benefit from his teachings; he led his first retreat for us with Ajahn Yatiko in April 2011.

Ajahn Karunadhammo is a monk at [Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery](#), a monastery in the Thai Forest Tradition of Theravāda Buddhism located in Redwood Valley, California.

Awareness is your refuge:
Awareness of the changings of feelings, of attitudes, of moods, of material change and emotional change: Stay with that, because it's a refuge that is indestructible. It's not something that changes. It's a refuge you can trust in. This refuge is not something that you create. It's not a creation. It's not an ideal. It's very practical and very simple, but easily overlooked or not noticed. When you're mindful, you're beginning to notice, it's like this.

—Ajahn Sumedho
The Sound of Silence

It was the first monastery to be established in the U.S. by followers of the Theravāda Buddhist master, Ajahn Chah.

Ajahn Karunadhammo was born in North Carolina in 1955. He trained as a nurse and moved to Seattle in his early twenties, where he came in contact with the Theravāda tradition. He made the decision to ordain while visiting Thailand in 1995, and he was part of the original group that arrived at Abhayagiri on June 1, 1996. After training for two years as an anāgārika and sāmaṇera, he took full bhikkhu ordination in May 1998, with Ajahn Pasanno as his preceptor.

During the retreat, we will create a monastic environment by following the Eight Precepts (see page 3) and reflecting on every activity as part of practice. The retreat will be held in noble silence and offer morning and evening chanting, sitting and walking meditation, daily instructions, and Dhamma talks. The morning and evening chanting will include the lighting of candles and incense. Rooms are double occupancy; retreatants with a special need for a single room should speak with the registrar. There will be two vegetarian meals each day.

In keeping with Theravāda tradition, this retreat is being offered on a *dana* (freewill donation) basis. There will be an opportunity to offer *dana* at the end of the retreat. That *dana*, and the *dana* collected as a deposit fee (see below), will be combined to pay for all of the sleeping rooms, the meditation hall and other rooms, meals, use of the facility,

organizational costs, and the teacher's transportation, room, and meals. *Dana* above these costs will be offered to the Sanghaphala Foundation in appreciation for Ajahn Karunadhammo's teachings. If you would like to learn more about the ancient and beautiful tradition of *dana*, see page 4. In addition, these two articles by Ajahn Thanissaro may be of interest:

- [The Economy of Gifts](#)
- [No Strings Attached](#)

To register for the retreat, complete the registration form at the back of this newsletter and mail it with a \$100 deposit. The deposit is required to hold your place; it can be refunded upon request, or, as noted above, it can be offered as additional *dana*.

To hear some of Ajahn Karunadhammo's teachings, sample his Dhamma talks on the [Abhayagiri website](#). ❖



Pine Lake path

Working with the Five Hindrances

By Ajahn Karunadhammo

In our Dhamma practice, many of us may choose to work with the five hindrances throughout our day. And we should pay attention to these hindrances and work with them because, not only are they an obstruction when we sit down to practice meditation, but they're also very concrete manifestations of the underlying tendencies of greed, hatred and delusion, tendencies that keep us moving through *Samsara* (cyclical rebirth). Examining the hindrances is a good way to see how these underlying tendencies manifest themselves in our daily life. They are quite concrete if we get to know them and start to work with them in a constructive way.

Often times, with practice, we can get hooked into the paradigm of just being mindful of a particular state of mind that is happening. This paradigm is correct in some ways, but maybe not complete. We may think that if we're aware of being with a mind state then that, in and of itself, is sufficient to deal with it. In other words, if we know that it's there, then, presumably, we can watch its rising, its maintaining, and its cessation. That's a primary skill of mind that we need to develop: a straightforward, nonjudgmental awareness of a particular mind state.

With these hindrances, though, there are also real, concrete antidotes

Not only are the hindrances an obstruction when we sit down to practice meditation, but they're also very concrete manifestations of the underlying tendencies of greed, hatred and delusion, tendencies that keep us moving through *Samsara*.

that we can use to work with them. It says in the Satipatthana Sutta that the five hindrances are to be known like all the other objects of mindfulness. But one can also reflect on how it is that an unarisen hindrance arises, how one can deal with or tend to a hindrance that's already arisen, and how one can prevent its future arising. It's a little bit more than bare noting of a particular hindrance. We can actually know more about it: how it comes to be, what encourages it, what nourishes it, what denourishes it, and how to work with it in a real, active sense when it's overwhelming and doesn't respond to bare attention.

It's really important to know how to recognize these hindrances. Although we probably have experienced most of the hindrances

many times, we often have our own tendencies. We might tend towards escaping from discomfort by using sensual gratification and indulgence.

Or we may react to challenging situations with immediate irritation by using a verbal retort or with resistance by having an internal sense of heating up. Likewise, we may become confused and doubtful, or shut everything out by annihilating ourselves with sleep, or worry and become restless and anxious.

We need to take note of where our buttons get pushed and the responses that tend to be most habitual, and to start working with those aspects throughout the day. We do this to help prevent those hindrances from arising. People may also need to work with a hindrance like aversion or irritation, even when it's not present. We can do this by learning how to develop its antidote: loving kindness. You develop this, for example, so that the strength of that antidote is within your reach to access any time you need to use it. We also work with the hindrances by developing some of their counterparts, even when we're not experiencing such a hindrance. This can create great strength and balance so that it's available when there is a need to bring it into action. ❖

Additional Opportunity to Practice with Ajahn Karunadhammo

On Sunday, April 26, 2015, Ajahn Karunadhammo will lead our regular weekly meditation and offer a Dhamma talk. If you can attend the retreat, which will open the next day, this will be a wonderful introduction. If you aren't able to attend the retreat, this will give you a chance to benefit from Ajahn Karunadhammo's teachings. The sitting is 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. Please join us!

The Dhamma Is Beautiful in the Beginning, Beautiful in the Middle, Beautiful in the End: The Pleasure and Simplicity of the Eight Precepts

by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

The phrase that titles this article is something I heard first when I attended a monastic retreat in 1996. It is recited during the daily morning recitation of the Homage to the Buddha. It stayed with me throughout that retreat and has continued to inspire and comfort me ever since.

An embodied sense of beauty, simplicity, clarity, and wisdom has drawn me to practicing with monastics again and again. This sense is not due to my personal propensities, but is the result of the Buddha's wisdom in outlining the precepts and establishing rules for living in spiritual community. On a monastic retreat we join with the community of monks or nuns to devote ourselves to purifying the mind, and we experience firsthand the safety and goodwill of a setting where everyone lives in accord with the Eight Precepts.

I find that being around monks or nuns energizes my own practice. Seeing the evident benefits, to themselves and others, of their commitment to cultivate kindness, generosity, and wisdom encourages me to put forth that same effort. Now that I have known various monks and nuns over a period of time, I have seen how living in accord with the precepts while also training the mind results in a countenance that is increasingly bright and clear and a manner that is increasingly kind and at ease.

For monks and nuns, the process of training the mind is structured by the rules set down by the Buddha in the Vinaya. These rules establish the best conditions to encourage turning inward, where true freedom is found. On retreat, following the Eight Precepts offers us an opportunity to establish similar conditions.

The Eight Precepts build upon the basic Five Precepts. When living in accord with the eight, the precept on

refraining from sexual misconduct changes to refraining from all sexual activity. The additional three precepts are to refrain from eating after noon; to refrain from beautification, adornment, and entertainment; and to refrain from sleeping in high or luxurious places. This last precept is

The Eight Precepts

1. **Non-harming:** Not intentionally killing or harming any living creature.
2. **Non-stealing:** Not taking that which is not freely given.
3. **Refraining from false speech:** Speaking only what is true and useful, speaking wisely, responsibly, and appropriately. In the retreat context, this involves keeping noble silence.
4. **Refraining from sexual activity:** Refraining from all sexual activity.
5. **Refraining from the use of intoxicants and drugs that lead to carelessness:** Abstaining from the use of alcohol or other *nonprescription* drugs.
6. **Refraining from eating at the wrong times.** Not eating from noon until dawn the next day.
7. **Refraining from entertainment, beautification, and adornment.** Not indulging in entertainment, or adorning the body with jewelry, makeup, or other things that draw the attention of others or distract from turning inward.
8. **Refraining from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.** Not overly indulging in sleep or using sleep as a means of distraction.

usually interpreted to mean refraining from overindulgence in sleep or from using sleep as another way to distract the mind. These precepts, in addition to the basic five, simplify daily living so that effort and attention can more easily be directed to the purification and training of the mind.

The precept regarding not eating after noon is the one that causes people the most concern when considering whether to attend an Eight-Precept retreat. I too was worried about how I would handle not eating after noon, but in fact have found that following this precept is pleasant and conducive to greater ease of well-being. For me (and for others with whom I have spoken), it is not difficult to be on Eight Precepts. For most of us, our bodies are well nourished, and we do not experience much hunger. In fact, undertaking this precept has helped me realize that what I thought was hunger has little to do with a need for food, but is usually thirst, sleepiness, boredom, or a simple, but strong, desire for distraction and mental engagement. I usually find that during the late afternoon, the habit to expect food will arise. What is a pleasant surprise, however, is how the clear fruit juice that is put out around 5 p.m. is completely sufficient, tastes wonderful, is incredibly satisfying, and gives more of an energy boost than most meals I eat. Also, the fact that no one else is eating, and that there are no sights or smells of food, makes it quite easy not to eat.

For me, the benefits of living on the Eight Precepts become evident after only a short while. I enjoy the experience of knowing that when I look at my plate of food at the midday meal, I am seeing everything I'll eat for the rest of the day. That allows me to assess what to eat or not eat in a way that is much more difficult to do when I'm grabbing a snack here and a meal there throughout the day. To my surprise, the simplicity of seeing my food, my fuel, laid out, eating it, and then being finished with eating until the next morning is a great relief. I'm

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 3)

often surprised with how much mental energy is involved with anticipating, eating, and finishing a meal, and how much calmer I am when I don't need to expend that energy. It is one less thing to deal with or make decisions about. I feel better, and sleep better too because I feel light and comfortable. I notice that after a retreat, when I return to eating throughout the day, I think about eating more often, I feel full and heavy most of the time, and, illogically, the sense of being full seems to encourage me to eat more frequently.

Being on Eight Precepts also means I have to be smarter in what I choose to eat at breakfast and the main meal and be certain to eat a variety of foods while avoiding those that fill me up without any nutritive value. In effect, I have to be intentional in eating wisely for the true purpose of eating—to nourish and maintain the body!

We frequently have strong views about what is necessary for our happiness. The wisdom of the Buddha's teachings, and our own meditation experience, show us that these views are often misguided. We

have been taught that activity, conversation, and satisfaction of our sensual desires are necessary for contentment. However, when we let go of what we thought we needed, we discover for ourselves a beauty, purity, lightness, and ease previously unknown to us. By living within rules that may initially seem constraining, we find within ourselves a place that is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end. ❖

(This is a slightly revised version of an article that originally appeared in Clear Mind, August 2007.)

Abhayagiri Monastery on Dana Practice

During the past 2,500 years, support for the monastic life has been provided entirely by lay supporters through daily acts of generosity. In this spirit, support in the form of work, money, foodstuffs, building materials or other help is both appreciated and needed. Your generosity allows the spiritual community to survive and to flourish. Theravāda Buddhism has managed to keep the rich and vital interrelationship between lay and monastic communities set forth by the Buddha intact over the centuries. Theravāda monastics, although renunciants, are not permitted to be recluses. To ensure this, the Buddha required that monastics be totally dependent upon the lay community for their physical support. Monks and nuns cannot handle money and can only eat or drink that which is offered to them. Reciprocally, the monastic community provides an important function for the lay community by caring for their spiritual needs and by providing moral and spiritual teachings and examples. The two communities, each essential to a balanced society, support and enrich one another within this economy of gifts.

New East-Side Sitting Group!

We're thrilled to announce a new sitting group on Madison's east side. With this addition, Madison Insight Meditation Group now 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, 5th Sundays: 45-minute sitting followed by talk and discussion

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

This sitting group is peer-led.

East: Mondays 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.



Upcoming Half-Day Sits

Madison Insight Meditation Group will hold a half-day sit on Saturday, April 4, at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, in Madison. A half-day sit is also planned for a Saturday in June; the date will be announced on the [website](#).

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. ❖

Listening Assistance for Yogis with Hearing Loss

In the last issue of *Clear Mind*, we offered our readers the opportunity to contribute toward the purchase of a hearing assistance system for yogis with hearing loss. We are thrilled to announce that with the sangha's generosity, we've been able to acquire a high-quality transmitter and four receivers. These will be available at the Sunday night sitting group and on retreats, and we will be able to add receivers if the need grows. If you or someone you know has hearing difficulty, please don't hesitate to ask for one of the receivers. ❖

Upcoming Retreats

Ajahn Karunadhammo, Apr. 27–May 1, 2015

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, July 17–19, 2015

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

Santikaro, Oct. 8–11, 2015

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

Ajahn Sucitto, June 5–9, 2016

Christine Center, Willard, WI (residential)

Sharon Salzberg, summer 2016

Dates and venue TBD (Madison area, nonresidential)

James Baraz, Oct. 27–30, 2016

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

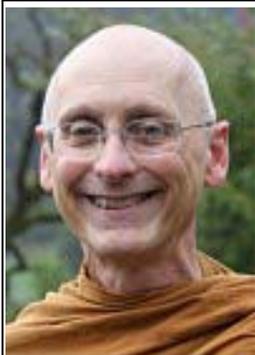
CLEAR MIND

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

Cathy Loeb: Editor
Janice Sheppard: Contributing writer

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



Understanding Obstructions on the Path, and Letting Go

Residential Retreat with Ajahn Karunadhammo

April 27–May 1, 2015

5:00 p.m. Monday until 1:00 p.m. Friday

Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI

Sponsored by Madison Vipassana, Inc. (madisonmeditation.org)

Ajahn Karunadhammo, a monk at [Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery](#) in Redwood Valley, California, will lead this four-day residential meditation retreat. Ajahn Karunadhammo was born in North Carolina in 1955. He trained as a nurse and moved to Seattle in his early twenties, where he came in contact with the Theravāda tradition. He made the decision to ordain while visiting Thailand in 1995, and he was part of the original group that arrived at Abhayagiri on June 1, 1996. After training for two years as an anāgārika and sāmaṇera, he took full bhikkhu ordination in May 1998, with Ajahn Pasanno as his preceptor.

This residential retreat will be suitable for both beginning and experienced meditators. During the retreat, we will create a monastic environment by following the Eight Precepts (see below) and reflecting on every activity as part of practice. The retreat will be held in noble silence and offer morning and evening chanting, sitting and walking meditation, daily instructions, and Dhamma talks. The morning and evening chanting will include the lighting of candles and incense. Rooms are double occupancy; retreatants with a special need for a single room should speak with the registrar. There will be two vegetarian meals each day.

Dana

In keeping with Theravāda tradition, this retreat is being offered on a *dana* (freewill donation) basis. There will be an opportunity to offer dana at the end of the retreat. That dana, and the dana collected as a deposit fee (see next page), will be combined to pay for all of the sleeping rooms, the meditation hall and other rooms, meals, use of the facility, organizational costs, and the teacher's transportation, room, and meals. Dana above these costs will be offered to the Sanghaphala Foundation in appreciation for Ajahn Karunadhammo's teachings. If you would like to learn more about the ancient and beautiful tradition of dana, two articles by Ajahn Thanissaro may be of interest:

- [The Economy of Gifts](#)
- [No Strings Attached: The Buddha's Culture of Generosity](#)

The Eight Precepts

1. **Non-harming:** Not intentionally killing or harming any living creature.
2. **Non-stealing:** Not taking that which is not freely given, respecting the property of all beings.
3. **Refraining from false speech:** Speaking only what is true and useful, speaking wisely, responsibly, and appropriately. In the context of this retreat, this involves keeping noble silence.
4. **Refraining from sexual activity:** Refraining from all sexual activity.
5. **Refraining from the use of intoxicants and drugs that lead to carelessness:** Abstaining from the use of alcohol or other *nonprescription* drugs. This does not apply to medically required drugs. Please *do* continue to take any prescription medications you normally use.
6. **Refraining from eating at the wrong times.** Not eating from noon until dawn the next day. There will be a light morning meal and a main meal that is completed by noon. Around 5:00 p.m., tea and clear fruit juices will be available. Those with medical conditions that make it impossible to abide by this precept should discuss their situation with the registrar.
7. **Refraining from entertainment, beautification, and adornment.** Not indulging in entertainment, or adorning the body with jewelry, makeup, or other things that draw the attention of others or distract from turning inward.
8. **Refraining from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.** Not overly indulging in sleep or using sleep as a means of distraction.

Special needs

To inquire about special situations, contact Ann Varda, registrar, at 608-843-7531 or annvarda@gmail.com. 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 or (608) 239-9790.

Registration

Early registrations are encouraged. Registration is on a space-available basis and must include the registration form below and a \$100 deposit. The deposit is required to hold your spot; it can be refunded upon request, or, as noted above, it can be offered as additional dana. Confirmation will be provided by email along with information on the facility, driving directions, and recommendations on what to bring. Registrants who do not get a spot will be notified they have been placed on a waiting list. Deposit checks from individuals who do not get a spot in the retreat, or who cancel by March 30, 2015, can be refunded upon request. The deposit cannot be refunded to those who cancel after March 30. For questions about registration, contact Ann Varda, registrar, at 608-843-7531 or annvarda@gmail.com.

To register

Send a check for \$100 payable to **Madison Vipassana, Inc.**, with the registration form below to:

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

REGISTRATION FORM—PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY.

Ajahn Karunadhammo Retreat, April 27–May 1, 2015, Pine Lake Retreat Center

Circle your gender: M F

Is this your first Vipassana retreat? Yes _____ No _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Email _____