

# CLEAR MIND



## Retreat with Sharon Salzberg, July 25–27, 2014

Madison Vipassana, Inc., is delighted to welcome renowned meditation teacher and author Sharon Salzberg back to Madison to lead a nonresidential weekend retreat July 25–27. The theme of the retreat will be lovingkindness.



Sharon first encountered Buddhism in 1969 in an Asian philosophy course. She traveled to India the next year, where she

studied with a number of respected Buddhist teachers. She began teaching Vipassana meditation on her return to the U.S. in 1974, playing a significant role in bringing the practice to the West. With Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield, she co-founded Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, MA. Salzberg and Goldstein went on to establish the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in 1989 and Forest Refuge in 1998.

Sharon leads retreats worldwide. She is also a much sought-after speaker and a prolific writer. Her books include *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* (1995), *A Heart as Wide as the World* (1999), *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience* (2003), *The Force of Kindness: Change Your Life with Love and Compassion* (2006), and most recently, *Real Happiness at Work: Meditations for Accomplishment, Achievement, and Peace* (2013).

The July nonresidential 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, and Dhamma talks.

The retreat will be held at the Lussier Family Heritage Center in Madison, WI. The Lussier Center offers a beautiful and peaceful setting for this wonderful practice opportunity.

The cost of the retreat is \$120, which covers vegetarian lunches, teacher transportation, facility charges,

and other retreat expenses. In keeping with Theravāda 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](http://madisonmeditation.org). Early registration is encouraged to ensure a spot. Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. A list of nearby lodgings appears on page 3.

For a taste of Sharon's teachings, sample any of 76 talks available free of charge on the [Dharma Seed website](http://DharmaSeed.com). ❖



There is no denying that our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. There is no denying that if society suffers, we ourselves suffer. Nor is there any denying that the more our hearts and minds are afflicted with ill-will, the more miserable we become. Thus we can reject everything else: religion, ideology, all received wisdom. But we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion.

— H.H. the Dalai Lama

### Additional Opportunity to Practice with Sharon Salzberg

Join Madison Insight Meditation Group at our regular weekly meditation on Sunday, July 27, at 6:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. Sharon Salzberg will offer the Dhamma talk that evening. If you can attend her retreat, this will be a delightful way to hear more from Sharon. If you aren't able to attend the retreat, this will give you a chance to benefit from her teaching.

# What Is Faith? An Interview with Sharon Salzberg

**Sharon, from a Buddhist perspective, what does the word “faith” mean? Why is it important?**

In Pali, the language of the original Buddhist texts, the word usually translated as faith is *saddha*, which literally means “to place the heart upon.” To have faith is to offer one’s heart. In Pali faith is a verb, an action, as it is also in Latin and Hebrew. It is not a singular state that we either have or don’t have, but is something that we do. We “faith.”

Once, when I was with Sayadaw U Pandita in Burma, he asked us which of the five spiritual powers—faith, energy or effort, concentration, mindfulness and wisdom—was the most important. Since he frequently demanded so much courageous effort from his students, I responded “Effort.” He replied, “No.” As we were in the heartland of mindfulness, that was my next reply. Again, he said, “No.” He then answered his own question: “Faith is the most important quality, because without it we wouldn’t be moved to cultivate any of the others.”

The Buddha said, “Faith is the beginning of all good things.” No matter what we encounter in life, it is faith that enables us to try again, to trust again, to love again. Even in times of immense suffering, it is faith that helps us to relate to the present moment in such a way that we can go on, we can move forward, instead of becoming lost in resignation or despair. The capacity for this type of faith is inherent in every human being. We might not recognize it, or know how to nurture it, but we can learn to do both.

No matter what we encounter in life, it is faith that enables us to try again, to trust again, to love again. Even in times of immense suffering, it is faith that helps us to relate to the present moment in such a way that we can go on, we can move forward, instead of becoming lost in resignation or despair. The capacity for this type of faith is inherent in every human being.

**How can we practice faith—can we learn to incline the mind towards its possibilities? What is the relationship between faith and wisdom?**

We can practice faith in many ways, though its appearance is often like a gift. We can certainly practice seeing the world in a clearer way, with more wisdom, which inclines the mind towards faith. If we see, for example, how much everything and everyone is constantly changing, we see that in the midst of change there is always a sense of possibility—this realization ignites faith. If, in the midst of suffering, we can still recognize the ties we have to others—that all are vulnerable to pain and loss, whatever our present circumstances are, that we are still held by the boundlessness of life itself even in our unhappiness, that

in truth we are not cut off and alone, however tempting the call of despair—that power of connection awakens our faith. In many ways faith is about connection—a deep connection to our own inherent capacity for wisdom and love no matter what, a connection to a bigger picture of life. Wisdom brings us to connection, which is the core of faith.

There are also traditional faith practices, for example taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which remind us that we are part of a larger community, and have immense potential for living lives not bound to the past, or to our habitual sense of limitation. These practices bring us in touch with great joy and love, which is the landscape of faith.

**What inspired you to write about a topic that is often decried in our culture?**

I wanted to help redeem the word. In the summer of 2001, I was part of *Tricycle Magazine’s* conference on Buddhism in the West (which poignantly took place in the Marriott Hotel at the World Trade Center in New York). I was in dialogue with Stephen Batchelor, and he asked why didn’t I use a more palatable word, like “trust.” I responded that the word “faith” often elicits a strong reaction, and that there is something valuable in our looking at that reaction. People carry different associations with the word “faith”—perhaps it connotes adherence to a belief system, blind surrender, unthinking devotion, or a lack of questioning. But, more uncommonly, it also implies the power to place our hearts, with intelligence and discernment, upon that which is wise and

compassionate. Faith is a liberating capacity that many of us don't often tap into.

### **Doubt is usually considered the force that opposes faith. Do you agree?**

There are several kinds of doubt. The most helpful is exemplified by the Buddha when he said, in the Kalama Sutta, "Don't believe anything just because I say it. Put it into practice and see for yourself if it is true." We must ask of any belief system: Can it transform our minds? Can it help reshape our pain into wisdom and love?

This kind of skillful doubt—a sincere and critical questioning—actually serves to deepen faith. It is based on a confidence in our own right and ability to know the truth for ourselves.

Another kind of doubt is known in the teachings as skeptical doubt, where we neither honestly question, nor put something into practice in order to see what it has

to teach us. With skeptical doubt we stand at a distance—we're cynical and remote. It is a stance of isolation, and often rooted in fear. So, for me, the right kind of doubt is an intrinsic part of the unfolding of genuine faith. I think that the state of mind that is truly the opposite of faith is despair.

### **Can you say a few words about this unfolding of genuine faith?**

The offering of one's heart happens in stages. Faith evolves from an initial bright faith—a falling in love with a teaching, a teacher, a way of life—to a faith that is verified through our sincere efforts. Then, as we come to deeply know the underlying truths of who we are and what our lives are about, abiding faith, or unwavering faith as it is traditionally called, arises. This abiding faith in ourselves is different from "conceit." Conceit lays claim to specialness—whereas our fundamental nature is not personal,

it's universal and shared. When we look at the Buddha or a great teacher, we can see our own potential for happiness and sustained compassion. This is a potential that all beings everywhere share. However, if we stop at faith in another, admiring the other and overlooking ourselves, our faith remains incomplete.

### **How can an understanding of faith help us face current world events?**

To be at all able to move forward in times of great difficulty or pain means drawing on one's own deepest experience, in fact relying on the kind of faith I'm talking about. It is my wish that we can remember to stay more connected to our deepest values, to the immediacy of love, and to the need to live a meaningful life. ❖

—*Insight Newsletter, Fall/Winter 2002/2003* (excerpted and reprinted with permission).

## Half Day Sits: Deepen Your Practice and Build Community

Madison Insight Meditation Group will hold half-day sittings on Saturday, June 21, and Saturday, August 30, at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, in Madison. The morning begins at 9:00 a.m. (try to arrive a little early), and the formal practice ends at about noon. Three 45-minute sitting periods will 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 meditation. The morning's practice will be 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.

### July Retreat: Places to Stay

#### **Lake Farm Park**

(camping next to the retreat center)  
Dane Co. Parks, [reservedane.com/](http://reservedane.com/)

#### **Super 8 Madison South**

1602 W. Beltline Hwy., Madison  
(608) 258-8882

#### **Days Inn**

4402 E. Broadway, Madison  
(608) 223-1800

#### **Sheraton Madison Hotel**

706 John Nolen Dr., Madison  
(608) 251-2300

#### **Country Inn & Suites**

400 River Pl., Madison  
(608) 221-0055

#### **AmericInn Lodge & Suites**

101 W. Broadway, Madison  
(608) 222-8601

## Upcoming Retreats

**Sharon Salzberg, July 25–27, 2014 (nonresidential)**

Lussier Family Heritage Center, Madison, WI

**Community retreat, Oct. 10–12, 2014 (residential)**

Pine Lake Center, Westfield, WI

## CLEAR MIND

The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc.  
Madison, WI

This newsletter is published periodically as a service to our meditation community. It is also 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)

Folding and address labeling provided by



---

**Madison Vipassana, Inc.**

2145 Linden Ave.

Madison, WI 53704