

CLEAR MIND



Residential Retreat October 6-9:

Gina Sharpe to Lead Pine Lake Retreat

Madison Vipassana, Inc., is pleased to welcome Gina Sharpe to lead its residential retreat at Pine Lake, October 6-9.

Gina received her training as a retreat teacher at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California, and Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts. She has been teaching since 1995 and is co-founder of the New York Insight Meditation Center, where she serves as a guiding teacher and president of its board of directors. She has also taught at Spirit Rock, Insight Meditation Society, Vallecitos Mountain Refuge, Mid America Dharma, Garrison Institute, Asia Society, Tibet House, the New York Open Center, the Katonah Yoga Center and a maximum security prison for women.

Originally from Jamaica, Gina immigrated to New York at age 11. Before becoming a meditation

teacher, she worked as a lawyer and was an assistant to a producer of feature-length films.

Gina has been personally recommended to lead the retreat by Ginny Morgan, a teacher beloved by many local practitioners. Ginny was previously scheduled to teach at the retreat, but recently became unable to travel or teach due to the effects of cancer, with which she has lived for many years. Ginny speaks highly about Gina Sharpe.

"You will adore her and feel her similarity to me as well as her wonderful differences," wrote Ginny in a recent letter to the sangha. "This will truly be a spe-

cial retreat and my bequest to you all."



Gina Sharpe

The retreat is suitable for beginning and experienced meditators. It will take place at Pine Lake Retreat Center in Westfield, WI, from 5:30 p.m. October 6 to 1 p.m. October 9. The cost, \$280, covers a shared room, vegetarian meals and teacher transportation. In

keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings; however, a donation (dana) to the teacher is encouraged. To read more about Gina Sharpe's teachings, see pages 2 and 3. For details about the retreat, see the enclosed registration form or www.vipassana.net.

Shaila Catherine Returns to Teach

Shaila Catherine, a respected meditation teacher from California, will give the dharma talk at 6 p.m. on December 18 at First Unitarian Society. Shaila has been practicing meditation for over thirty years and has been teaching since 1996. She is the author of *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm and Clarity* and of a new book *Wisdom Wide and Deep: A Practical Handbook for Mastering Jhana and Vipassana*. This is Shaila's second visit to Madison as a participant in a research project on meditation led by Richie Davidson, director of the Lab for Affective Neuroscience and the Waisman Lab for Brain Imaging & Behavior, at UW-Madison. She has generously agreed to extend her stay in order to teach on Sunday night. Shaila will lead a one-day retreat in Madison March 3, 2012 (details forthcoming). For more about Shaila Catherine, visit <http://imsb.org/about/teachers.php>

Gina Sharpe: Developing the Paramis in Daily Life

In our dedication to a path, how do we insure that our daily activities are aligned with our highest aspirations? Meditation practice gives energy to this quest, and our spiritual life is shaped by the aspiration that our day-to-day decisions reflect the larger vision of a life well lived.

Meditation and mindfulness are key elements of the Buddhist path. Yet, there is much more to a Buddhist spiritual life or Theravada practice than mindfulness alone. The brahmaviharas — loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity — and the paramis (literally, perfections of a Buddha) — generosity, ethics, renunciation, wisdom, vitality, patience, truthfulness, resolve/determination, loving-kindness and equanimity — can be cultivated through practice in daily life.

When the paramis are underdeveloped, the possibilities for progress in meditation are limited. Just as mindfulness supports in life practice, the cultivation of these excellent qualities of mind supports meditation practice.

The paramis are not meant simply to be thought of in a cognitive way, but intuitively and practically applied. You can work with the paramis by taking one each week or month and spending the time looking at your life in relationship to that parami. In every single realm of our life, each of the

paramis shows up in the mirror of relationships. We're not just practicing for ourselves alone. We practice in a field of beings, and they hold the key to our own happiness.

Try these suggestions for daily life practice:

You can, with mindfulness as your method, apply compassion as your motivation in many circumstances. It is helpful in the moment, and can also be illuminating and humbling. Here are some simple and ordinary examples:

Where you find yourself impatient with someone, not wanting their happiness, you can stop and see where they are suffering: "I see your suffering; may your suffering end."

Where you are feeling self-righteous and justified, look for where you can develop compassion. This can develop patience. Ask how your state of mind may affect the whole world. As Joseph Goldstein says, "The great discovery of the meditative journey is that all the forces for good and for harm playing out in the world are also right here in our own minds."

You can practice metta, (loving-kindness) anytime, in any circumstance. If you're in a traffic jam, instead of laying on the horn

or swearing or engaging in unkind speech, send metta and notice what happens internally and externally.

You can take up fear as an awareness practice, learning to let it go; and through that practice, learn the art and wisdom of non-clinging. Fear arises not only on the cushion, but also acutely in relationships with others. Be more mindful when fear is arising, and then employ the different methods in practice that help us to let

go, to not cling.

This develops wisdom and determination.

For instance, if you are in a meeting and someone intimidates you, you can nurture a calming practice—like

working with the breath or being aware of the touch points in the body—as a way of settling the energy right then and there. After employing calming, mind-settling practices, use investigative practices—the same ones you would use on the cushion—to observe the nature of fear. Be mindful of how fear expresses itself in the body, notice the different sensations that arise, and notice their impermanent nature. That leads to the insight that fear is an energy that arises in certain situations beyond our control, expresses itself in certain ways and

When we bring mindfulness to speech, deep insight into our own motivation can arise.

passes away. That is its nature. These insights lead to wisdom and renunciation of the habit of fear.

One of the most useful practices is mindfulness of speech, paying attention to what is happening when we speak. There's an ethical aspect to paying attention to speech. This can lead to the parami of truthfulness. It also helps us learn how not to cause harm and to take care of our relationships in a healthier way. When we bring mindfulness to speech, deep, wise insight into our own motivation can arise. By paying attention to the body in speaking and listening and to why we say what we say, renunciation leading to self-understanding, wisdom and self-purification can come about.

When we look at the motivation for speaking and acting, we can see whether we're responding kindly and compassionately or reacting to life habitually. We can also see whether we are creating another self.

The wisdom that realizes anatta, or not-self, can be liberating off the cushion. We can begin to understand this fundamental teaching in daily life and in non-abstract ways. We can be mindful of ways that we create, or re-create, a separate self. For example, we can look at how we compare ourselves with others, whether we are the best or the worst or not good enough. We can really begin to notice "self-ing" occurring. We can notice how we exaggerate our speech and how we make our "self" up in what we speak.

When you apply in life situations the methods of awareness and the motivations of kindness and compassion you've been learning and practicing, you develop strong faith in yourself -- confidence in yourself and confidence in the practice. The practice becomes alive for you.

The Ten Perfections

1. Dana: Generosity

May I be generous and helpful.

2. Sila: Morality

May I be well-disciplined and refined in manners.

May I be pure and clean in all my dealings.

May my thoughts, words and deeds be pure.

3. Nekkhamma: Renunciation

May I not be selfish and self-possessive, but selfless and disinterested.

May I be able to sacrifice my pleasure for the sake of others.

4. Panna: Wisdom

May I be wise and able to see things as they truly are.

May I see the light of truth and lead others from darkness to light.

May I be enlightened and be able to enlighten others.

5. Viriya: Energy

May I be energetic, vigorous and persevering.

May I strive diligently until I achieve my goal.

May I be fearless in facing dangers and courageously surmount all obstacles.

May I be able to serve others to the best of my ability.

6. Khanti: Patience

May I ever be patient.

May I be able to bear and forbear the wrongs of others.

May I ever be tolerant and see the good and beautiful in all.

7. Sacca: Truthfulness

May I ever be truthful and honest.

May I not swerve from the path of truth.

8. Adhitthana: Determination

May I be firm and resolute and have an iron will.

May I be soft as a flower and firm as a rock.

May I ever be high-principled.

9. Metta: Loving-kindness

May I ever be kind, friendly and compassionate.

May I be able to regard all as my brothers and sisters and be one with all.

10. Upekkha: Equanimity

May I ever be calm, serene, unruffled and peaceful.

May I gain a balanced mind.

May I have perfect equanimity.

May I serve to be perfect.

May I be perfect to serve.

From: *The Perfection of Generosity* Translated by Saya U Chit Tin, WKH
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Half-Day Meditation November 5

Madison Insight Meditation Group will host a half-day meditation from 9 a.m. to noon on November 5 in the Gabler Living Room, First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Dr., Madison. Meditation is followed by a potluck lunch. (If you can, please bring a food item to share.) The morning will consist of alternating periods of sitting and walking meditation.

If you can't attend for the entire session, feel free to come for a portion of it. Plan your arrival just a little before the hour, so you can join the last few minutes of walking and stay for the sitting meditation. No fee or registration is required. Questions? Call Dave or Lori at 608-238-1234.

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<http://www.vipassana.net>

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