

Right Thinking

The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings

Thich Nhat Hanh

Bodhichitta.

Our "mind of love" is the deep wish to cultivate understanding in ourselves in order to bring happiness in many beings. It is the motivating force for the practice of mindful living. With bodhichitta at the foundation of our thinking, everything we do or say will help others be liberated. Right Thinking also gives rise to Right Diligence. The Buddha offered many ways to help us to transform troublesome thoughts. One way, he said, is to replace an unwholesome thought with a wholesome one by "changing the peg," just as a carpenter replaces a rotten peg by hammering in a new one! If we are constantly assailed by unwholesome patterns of thought, we need to learn how to change the peg and replace those patterns with wholesome thoughts. The Buddha also likened unwholesome thinking to wearing dead snake around your neck. The easiest way, he said, to keep unwholesome thoughts from arising is to live in a wholesome environment, a community that practices mindful living. With the help and presence of Dharma sisters and brothers, it is easy to sustain Right Thinking. Dwelling in a good environment is preventive medicine. Right Thinking is thinking that is in accord with Right View. It is a map that can help us find our way. But when we arrive at our destination, we need to put down the map and enter the reality fully. "Think non-thinking" is a well-known statement in Zen. When you practice Right View and Right Thinking, you dwell deeply in the present moment, where you can touch seeds of joy, peace, and liberation, heal and transform your suffering, and be truly present for many others.