

## Starting on the Buddhist Path

Dear Friend,

It pains me that the one time you asked me about teaching you to meditate (when you showed an interest in meditation) that I did not provide you all I could in the way of encouragement. If the thought comes again - trust your inner being, your spirit, and find a teacher who can start you on the path of awakening and liberation. As for books, anything by Thich Nhat Hahn will be helpful as would books by the Dalai Lama or Pema Chodron. That book you have, *How not to be Afraid of your Own Life*, but Susan Piver is also an excellent starting place. Specifically, *The Miracle of Mindfulness* by Thich Nhat Hahn is a book to start with, or *Minding Mind : a course in basic meditation*, translated by Thomas Cleary.

There is another exception to my email about a No Contact policy. I am bound by the Bodhisatva Vow that I have taken to help any being on the path to enlightenment. I could no more deny you a request for help on this matter, than I could turn away from any sentient being that I could aid.

It's not so hard or obtuse. It's learning to be here and now, in the present moment. It's opening your heart to living with loving kindness and compassion. The reward for the effort to stay in the moment and centering your heart on compassion : you learn unconditional self-acceptance and self-love. You learn to be not so hard on yourself. You learn to make time for deep relaxation, for reflection, for regeneration. To end to cycle of having moods cycle up and down - happiness and depression. To be in the present, with gentle peace of mind and equanimity. To be able to embrace the reality of your Buddha nature.

Your parents are aging. The time will come when they pass on from this life. Share as much quality time with them now as you can. Let them know how grateful you are for the life they have given you - their nurturance. their guidance, their support. There will be a lot less remorse when they pass if you make this a priority.

Why do I share this? Because beyond the pain, loss, and suffering I have experienced since that quite horrible Christmas morning in 2007 - I am grateful to you for how you helped me grow as a person, to open and risk more. Because, whatever anger I may feel from what unfolded from your confessions on that Christmas morning, I acknowledge my contribution, my responsibility for the death of our relationship. I accept responsibility for where my life is now. I hold no ill feelings.

I wish you well - I pray for your well being, for your good health, and for your peace of mind, and that your life is filled with much joy. Please make time - enjoy the time - to take care of yourself. That's where it starts. I spent six hours today cleaning out Buddhist shrines that for a century vulnerable, hurting human beings have poured their fears, their prayers, their pleas, their cries for help into. Embrace your humanity, your imperfection that at its core is perfection beyond imagining. Accept, transform, fly free joyously.

Smile the Buddha's smile

Calm of dawning morning blooms

Earth embraces sky