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The Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism

BY THICH NHAT HANH | APRIL 12, 2017



Thich Nhat Hanh's guidelines for anyone wishing to live mindfully.



The Order of Interbeing (Tiep Hien) was formed by the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh in the mid-1960's, at a time when the Vietnam War was escalating and the teachings of the Buddha were desperately needed to combat the hatred, violence, and divisiveness enveloping his country.

On the full moon day of February 1966, Zen Master Nhat Hanh ordained six members into the Order—three men and three women ranging in age from twenty-two to thirty-two. All were board members of the School of Youth for Social Service, which he had helped found the year before. During the ceremony, the six ordainees vowed to study, practice, and observe the Fourteen Precepts of the Order of Interbeing, a wonderful blend of traditional Buddhist morality and contemporary social concerns.

For ten years, no new members were permitted to join the Order's core community. In fact, this "period of experimentation" was extended until 1981, when Nguyen Anh Huong, a microbiologist and lay meditation teacher, became the seventh member of the Order.

Today, there are thousands worldwide who regularly recite the Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism, which remain uniquely applicable to contemporary moral dilemmas. They are guidelines for anyone wishing to live mindfully. By developing peace and serenity through ethical and conscientious living, we can help our society make the transition from one based on greed and consumerism to one in which thoughtfulness and compassionate action are of the deepest value.

—Fred Eppsteiner

The Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism

1. Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.
2. Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.
3. Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.
4. Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering, including personal contact, visits, images, and sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.
5. Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life Fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.
6. Do not maintain anger or hatred. Learn to penetrate and transform them when they are still seeds in your consciousness. As soon as they arise, turn your attention to your breath in order to see and understand the nature of your hatred.
7. Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Practice mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. Be in touch with what is wondrous, refreshing, and healing both inside and around you. Plant seeds of joy, peace, and understanding in yourself in order to facilitate the work of transformation in

- the depths of your consciousness.
8. Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.
 9. Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things of which you are not sure. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.
 10. Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community, however, should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.
 11. Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live. Select a vocation that helps realize your ideal of compassion.
 12. Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and prevent war.
 13. Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others, but prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.
 14. Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the Way. (For brothers and sisters who are not monks and nuns:) Sexual expression should not take place without love and commitment. In sexual relationships, be aware of future suffering that may be caused. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.

From “Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism,” Revised edition: Oct. 1993 by Thich Nhat Hanh, published by Parallax Press, Berkeley, California.



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ABOUT THICH NHAT HANH

Thich Nhat Hanh is a renowned Zen Master and poet, and founder of the Engaged Buddhist movement. He is the author of over a hundred books which have sold millions of copies worldwide. His most recent books are *Inside the Now* and *No Mud, No Lotus*. Thich Nhat Hanh lives at Plum Village practice center in France.

TOPICS: Engaged Buddhism, Order of Interbeing, Shambhala Sun - Jan '94, Thich Nhat Hanh

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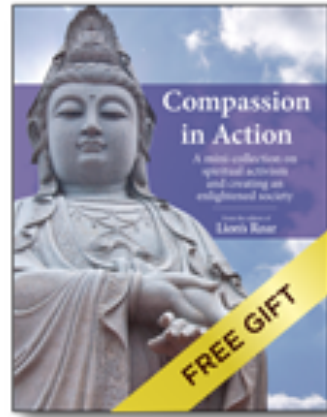
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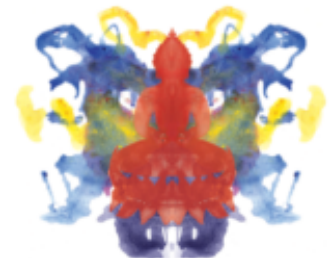
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