



Gay Buddhist Fellowship

Newsletter

A Monthly Publication of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship, San Francisco

December 1995

GBF Calendar

GBF's 24-hour hotline: 415/974-9878. Call for info. about GBF and a listing of GBF-sponsored events. To skip the recording and leave a message, press 5.

5 Dec. (Tue.), Steering Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m., at the home of John Krowka,

7 Dec., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Alan Oliver,

9 Dec. (Sat.), Monthly Potluck, 7 pm, at the home of John Krowka

10 Dec., Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m., 273 Page St., SF. Informal panel, with discussion to follow, on dealing with HIV from the perspective of the Buddhist teachings.

10 Dec. (Sun.), News/Calendar/Classifieds Deadline for GBF Newsletter.

14 Dec. Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Lee Robbins,

21 Dec., Thursday Sitting, 8 pm, at the home of Mark Marion

24 Dec., Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m., 273 Page St., SF. Open discussion. ♡

28 Dec., Thursday Sitting, call David Holmes for location



GBF Member Brian LeFevre Dies

by George Gayuski

[Editor's Note: Brian was on the GBF Steering Committee for a year and a half. He facilitated the Sunday morning meetings, and made a great contribution to our sangha. We are thankful for his practice and the time he shared with us.]

Brian LeFevre passed away at home on October 29, 1995, from cancer. Several friends and his sister were with him. Brian had a wide network of friends who looked after him regularly during his last months. Brian's sister, Kathy, took devoted and wonderful care of Brian and made the last months of his life especially filled with love.

Brian discovered Taoism and Buddhism in his early twenties, and almost immediately moved to San Francisco to begin practice at Zen Center. Shortly thereafter, he found himself at Tassajara for three-and-a-half years of Zen training. After a period of time back in San Francisco, Brian went to live in Barcelona where he taught for many years. It was in Spain that he met Josep, his life's love.

Although Brian was in some ways a private person, he was also often animated. He would frequently express his perspective in surprisingly bold terms. (He surprised many a Zen student!) Brian was a remarkably intelligent man. He could discuss any number of subjects knowledgeably.

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Buddhist Practice and HIV Disease is Topic of Sunday Meeting

At the Sunday morning meeting on December 10, we will have a discussion about dealing with HIV from the perspective of the Buddhist teachings. What did the Buddha say about sickness and death, and how can we cope with this disease in our own lives, and those of our partners, friends, and family?

We hope to have present at the meeting an informal "panel of experts" who will first share their views with us. Then we'll open up the discussion so everyone can participate. Please join us for what promises to be an informative and supportive gathering. ♡



Coming in January...

An article by Alan Oliver on the "Buddha and Boundaries" workshop that was originally scheduled for this issue of the GBF Newsletter will appear in the January issue. We also hope to have a surprise feature article.

Dharma Centers

[Each center offers ongoing programs and activities. If interested, please call them directly.]

- **BPF** Buddhist Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley 94704. 510/525-8596.
- **BSC** Berkeley Shambhala Center. 2288 Fulton Street, Berkeley. 510/841-6475 or 510/549-1481.
- **BZC** Berkeley Zen Center, 1933 Russell Street, Berkeley 94703. 510/845-2403.
- **CML** Community of Mindful Living, P.O. Box 7355, Albany 94707. 510/527-3751.
- **DI** Dudjon International, P.O. Box 40155, Berkeley 94704. 510/849-9928.
- **EGZC** Empty Gate Zen Center, 5707 Oakgrove Ave., Oakland 94618. 510/653-5991.
- **GGF** Green Gulch Farm (SF Zen Center): 1601 Shoreline Highway, Sausalito. 415/383-3134.
- **HSZC** Hartford Street Zen Center: 57 Hartford St., SF. 415/863-2507.
- **LMB** Land of Medicine Buddha: 5800 Prescott Road, Soquel. 408/462-8383.
- **NI** Nyingma Institute: 1815 Highland Place, Berkeley 94709. 510/843-6812.
- **ODD** Orgyen Dorje Den/Bay Area Yeshe Nyingpo: 410 Townsend #406, SF. 415/826-7181.
- **POL** PÖL Pema Ösel Ling: 2013 Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos. 408/761-6266.
- **RF** Rigpa Fellowship: 816 Bancroft Way, Berkeley. 510/644-1858.
- **SBC** Saraha Buddhist Center, 3145 Geary Blvd. #515, SF. 415/731-5973.
- **SCZC** Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School Street, Santa Cruz. 408/457-0206.
- **SFBC** San Francisco Buddhist Center: 37 Bartlett St., SF. 415/282-2018.
- **SFSC** San Francisco Shambhala Center: 1630 Taraval St., SF. 415/731-4426.
- **SFZC** San Francisco Zen Center: 300 Page Street, SF. 415/863-3136.
- **SMZC** Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, 6367 Sonoma Mountain Road, Santa Rosa. 707/545-8105.
- **SR** Spirit Rock Meditation Center: 5000 Sir Frances Drake Blvd., Woodacre. 415/488-0170; 488-0164.
- **TCL** Tse Chen Ling Center: 4 Joost Ave, SF. 415/641-0671.
- **VI** Vajrapani Institute, P.O. Box 2130, Boulder Creek 95006. 408/338-6654. ♥

The Local Dharma

December 1995-January 1996

[Note: Sometimes schedules change, so we recommend you call to confirm events.]

Special Events

4, 11 Dec. (Mon.) Numata Lecture Series on Engaged Buddhism, sponsored by the Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1900 Addison St., Berkeley, 7:10 pm. "The Practice of Compassion in the Context of Violence and Abuse" with Alta Brown, (12/4); and "A Shin Buddhist Response to Criticism of the Non-Engaging Buddhists" with Ken Tanaka (12/11). 510/849-2383.

5, 12, 19 Dec. (Tue.) "The Basic Meditations" with Tom Dempsey. A practical series of meditation classes based on *The Meditation Handbook* by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. The subjects of the evenings are as follows: "The Four Great Rivers: Coming to Terms With Our Suffering" (12/5), "The Psychology of Discontent" (12/12), and "The Path to Liberation" (12/19). \$10 per class. SBC



16 Dec. (Sat.) "Meditation and Inquiry" with Howard Cohn. Basic meditation instructions, sitting, walking, and Dharma inquiry. For beginning and experienced meditators. 9 am-5pm. \$30 (includes lunch). SR

Howard Cohn has been practicing vipassana since 1978. He has also studied with teachers in the Advaita and Dzogchen traditions and incorporates the non-dual perspective into his vipassana teaching.

16 Dec. (Sat.) "One Day Zen Retreat" with Empty Gate Zen Center teacher, Jeff Kitzes. \$30 (lunch not included). The retreat includes boxing, chanting, extended Zen practice, and private Dharma interviews with Jeff Kitzes. 9 am-4 pm. EGZC

16 Dec. (Sat.) "Introduction to Meditation" with Tse Chen Ling director, Carol Corradi. The program includes several short meditations and basic instruction on different meditation techniques, and concludes with a brief introduction to basic Tibetan Buddhism. This introduction is offered monthly on the third Saturday of each month. 9 am-11 am. TCL

27-28 Jan. (Sat.-Sun.) "The Paradox of Love & Loss: The Seamless Path of the Heart" with Eugene Cash, Nancy Sobonya, and Patrick Thornton. A non-residential weekend of traditional Buddhist teachings and modern psychological perspectives on grief and loss. Meditation, group process, inquiry, loving kindness, and equanimity practice. \$30 per day (includes lunch). Sat., 9 am-5 pm./Sun., 10 am-5 pm. Codes PT1 (1/27), PT2 (1/28). SR

Beyond the Bay

15 Dec.-13 Jan. "Winter Dathun and Weekthuns." Month and weeklong Buddhist meditation and practice intensive. This program is staffed by senior students and includes lodging, food, and instruction in meditation. To \$630. At the Rocky Mountain Shambhala Center in Red Feather Lakes, CO. 970/881-2184 ext. 272.

Contributors

Thanks to the following people who helped with this issue of the *GBF Newsletter*: Al Chase, Rob Del Ré, George Gayuski, Ron Ginsberg, Bob Hass, David Holmes, John Krowka, Alan Oliver, Stephan Pardi, Clint Seiter, Brian Shelley, and Daishin David Sunseri.





How to Remain Mindful in the Workplace



by Rob Del Ré

A number of years ago, I made a conscious choice to simplify my life, and working in the mailroom at the University of California has made it possible for me to do that. To paraphrase a saying, one must strive for simplicity and repetition in order to produce a spiritual awareness. Hakuin, an eighteenth century Rinzaï Zen master, has written, "Concentration in the midst of activity excels concentration in stillness by a hundred, a thousand, or even a hundred million times."

Working in the mailroom is not without its periods of stressful activities and shifting priorities. As a result, I have had to devise "techniques" to keep myself balanced and grounded. I'd like to share some of these with you.

The same techniques that work while sitting in practice also work while standing or walking. Sometimes we forget that our practice is more than just sitting alone in a quiet room; it is wherever we may be. The aim is to be as totally mindful (focused and alert) as possible to the situation at hand. For one thing, I strive to remain conscious of my physical boundaries in the workplace. Also, I try to remain flexible to the schedule at hand, and take "one thing at a time," whatever the multiplicity of tasks I must accomplish. This also requires that I pace myself.

To remain focused, it is skillful to set one's priorities with clear beginnings and endings. I've found it helpful to remind myself frequently that everything is temporal and transitory, nothing lasting beyond the given moment. So whatever stress you may be feeling will pass. Relax and breathe. Remain loose and not uptight, remembering to consciously breathe out the tension and breathe in the renewal energy.

Another important technique is to be "good to yourself." Remember to take short breaks from your work such as a walk outside, or stretching tired muscles. While doing this, always remain mindful of your breathing and thereby your state of mind. This is a

good way of avoiding a scattered, fragmented self. Depending on the nature of one's work, this can be done every 20 minutes to every couple of hours.

Another good technique I've found is detaching consciously from the stressful situation, and returning only when you are more focused and fully alert. Just pulling yourself away for a few deep breaths, and then returning, can work wonders. It is the process, and not the end result, that truly matters in the larger scheme of things.

Being mindful at the workplace also requires taking a balanced approach to the job. If your work is primarily of a physical nature, like mine, it is helpful to use your breaks and lunchtime to stimulate your mind by reading, doing crossword puzzles, sitting quietly, or just being a silent observer of life all around you. If, on the other hand, your

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job requires mental activity, go out for a brisk walk, jog, or engage in any other athletic activity. The important thing is to be consciously present in whatever you may be doing as a balance to your work activity.

Paying attention to your physical work environment is another key to maintaining a mindful demeanor on the job. For example, you may want to adjust the lights or air flow (opening windows or turning on fans), and play classical music to create a more peaceful work environment. The ability to detach yourself from chaotic situations will help you avoid feeling fragmented and scattered. Only by remaining aware of these processes from moment to moment can you maintain your boundaries and be effective in furthering your practice in the workplace.

For me, the hardest thing about working in the mailroom is the sudden need to shift priorities or to "change gears." When that happens, I simply try to remind myself to pull back, detach myself mentally for a few moments from the task at hand, and then deal with the new task.

When I am not mindful, I notice my body feels the stress. For me, the usual symptoms are hunched shoulders, and a tightness in my jaw and stomach. This results from my pulling in and holding my breath. These are clues that are telling me to relax and let go of whatever is bothering me. Once I become aware of any physical symptoms, I know to drop my shoulders, loosen my jaw, or soften my belly.

In the end, it is up to you to become aware of and responsive to your states of mind and body, and then act accordingly. We spend a major portion of our lives working. Therefore, becoming increasingly skillful in responding to work situations in a more mindful way will only increase your practice in the most meaningful and beneficial way. ♡

Brian LeFevre

(from page 1)

Always the romantic, he definitely took a wistful and wholesome delight in the passions of life.

Last August we spent a wonderful week together at Tassajara. There, he told me that as a Zen student he used to check out tall stacks of books from the library so that during study hall, he had someplace to rest his head to sleep. It was great to see him at Tassajara. Even with the physical pain he was in at the time, he was happy to be there enjoying a bath, a nap, the sangha, and the sunshine and stars.

We already miss his humor, generosity, warmth, intellect, and character. We wish him an auspicious transition filled with the blessings and guidance of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. ♡

