

Welcome to this five-session Practice Group. We will meet every Monday from 10:30 am-12:00, through November 2nd, except for the holiday on October 12th.

We will practice with both *wings* of the Buddhist path, Wisdom and Compassion. Facing aging is not easy! We will certainly need both wings.

Let's start with Wisdom. What is Wisdom?

The first two parts of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path are considered the wisdom section of the path: Right View and Right Intention.

Right view is having an understanding

of the Four Noble Truths,

of *kamma* (*karma* in Sanskrit), or the natural law of conditionality, and an understanding

of the Three Characteristics of all things, which is that they are impermanent, (*anicca*), *imperfect or stressful*, (*dukkha*), and *not-self*, (*anatta*).

At first, our understanding of these truths is not very deep. It begins with intellectual understanding, but through practice it becomes a deeper experiential learning that, as CIMC founder Larry Rosenberg says, can go "bone deep". Such is the penetrating power of wisdom. Alignment with these truths: with what is considered "Clear and liberating seeing"

Right Intention is described as being three-fold.

The intention of renunciation. Letting go of thoughts and actions based on greed.

The intention of goodwill or Metta. Extending goodwill to all.

The intention of non-violence or harmlessness

Even though this is called the wisdom section, we can see how right intention also describes the other "wing" in the ethical basis for compassion, goodwill, non-greed, and non-harming.

Source Books

Our practice group has three source books. You do not need to rush out and buy these. I will share any passages that we will use in our weekly sessions. Some copies are available for loan to members in the CIMC library or from public libraries.

Aging with Wisdom by Olivia Hoblitzelle. Olivia hosted the Elders' affinity group here for many years. We owe her a debt of gratitude for living out her conviction that the special conditions of aging create the perfect conditions for growing in wisdom, ease and freedom.

Living in the Light of Death – On the Art of Being Truly Alive by CIMC founder Larry Rosenberg. Larry draws on his own practice and experience with many teachers, along with his years of teaching, to share how

contemplating aging, vulnerability to illness, and death can lead to a more vibrant experience of life. The structure he uses in this book, based on The Divine Messengers and the Five Remembrances is the structure we will use for our five sessions together.

Older and Wiser -Classical Buddhist Teachings on Aging, Sickness, and Death by Mu Seong, Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia, and Andrew Olendski is a wonderful collection of wisdom writings drawn from the original Pali suttas and commentaries. The three authors, one a Korean Zen teacher, one a vipassana teacher, and one a scholar of early Buddhist teachings, each comment on each of the selected writings.

Practice

Sit every day if possible, for 20-45 minutes

At the beginning or end of your sitting practice, either recite the five remembrances in English or Pali, or read them over slowly.

Three versions are provided at the end of this document. One is from Thich Nhat Hanh, one is from the Dhammayut order of the Theravadan Sangha and includes the Pali, and the third is from Amaravati monastery in England and includes the Pali with intonation marks. It is also the most grammatically correct Pali version, including the variations for different genders. Take your pick!

Reflections for Practice

- In the story of the future Buddha, while still a prince, left the palace and saw the Divine Messengers: a very old person, a sick person, a corpse, and a wandering holy man (samana):

Reflect on the connection between this story and what became the Five Remembrances.
- In the other story that was told last session, Bhaddiya, who, like the Buddha, was also a former prince, rejoiced that as a monk, he no longer had to be guarded or fear for his safety, even though he lived out in the open, meditating in the forest. He was relieved and free from fear. As you have aged, is there something that stands out that you no longer need to be stressed or fearful about?
- We spoke of the four classical stages (Āśramas) of life in Hindu society, which developed about 400 years after the life of the Buddha. It was more of a theoretical structure designed to integrate asceticism into mainstream Hinduism. What would be the stages of your life as you have aged? Originally they were offered as separate choices, without ages assigned. Later they began to be presented as a life journey.

Stage	Approximate Age	Core Focus & Purpose
Brahmacharya (Student)	0–25 years	Celibacy, education, discipline, and studying under a guru.
Gṛhastha (Householder)	25–50 years	Marriage, raising a family, accumulating wealth ethically, and community duty.
Vanaprastha (Forest Dweller)	50–75 years	Gradual retirement, passing down wisdom, and practicing detachment.
Sannyasa (Renunciate)	75–100 years	Total renunciation of worldly ties to focus exclusively on spiritual freedom.

Five Remembrances (a version from Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village Chanting Book:

I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old.

I am of the nature to have ill health. There is no way to escape ill health.

I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death.

All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.

My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground upon which I stand.

Five Subjects for Frequent Recollection

Let us now recite the passage for frequent recollection:

Jarā-dhammomhi jaram anatito.

I am subject to aging. Aging is unavoidable.

Byādhi-dhammomhi byādhim anatito.

I am subject to illness. Illness is unavoidable.

Maraṇa-dhammomhi maraṇam anatito.

I am subject to death. Death is unavoidable.

Sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi nānā-bhāvo vinā-bhāvo.

I will grow different, separate from all that is dear & appealing to me.

Kammassakomhi kamma-dāyādo kamma-yoni
kamma-bandhu kamma-paṭisaraṇo.

I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and live dependent on my actions.

Yaṁ kammaṁ karissāmi kalyāṇaṁ vā pāpakaṁ
vā tassa dāyādo bhavissāmi.

Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir.

Evam amhehi abhinham paccavekkhitabbam.

We should often reflect on this.

Five Subjects for Frequent Recollection

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[Hānda mayam abhiṇha-paccavekkhaṇa-pāṭham bhaṇāmase]

[Jarā-dhammomhi] jaram anatīto

Men Chant

[Jarā-dhammāmhi] jaram anatītā

Women Chant

I am of the nature to age, I have not gone beyond ageing.

Byādhi-dhammomhi byādhim anatīto

m.

Byādhi-dhammāmhi byādhim anatītā

w.

I am of the nature to sicken, I have not gone beyond sickness.

Marāṇa-dhammomhi maraṇam anatīto

m.

Marāṇa-dhammāmhi maraṇam anatītā

w.

I am of the nature to die, I have not gone beyond dying.

Sabbehi me piyehi manāpehi nānābhāvo vinābhāvo

*All that is mine, beloved and pleasing,
will become otherwise, will become separated from me.*

Kammassakomhi kammādāyādo kammayoni kammabandhu
kammapaṭisaṇaṇo

m.

Yaṃ kammaṃ karissāmi, kalyāṇam vā pāpakaṃ vā, tassa dāyādo
bhavissāmi

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- w. Kam^umassakā^umhi kam^umā^udāyādā kam^umayoni kam^umabandhu
 kam^umapa^uṭisa^ura^uṇā
 Ya^um kam^uma^um ka^urissā^umi, ka^ulyā^uṇa^um vā pā^upaka^um vā, tassa dāyādā
 bhavissā^umi

*I am the owner of my kamma, heir to my kamma, born of my kamma,
 related to my kamma, abide supported by my kamma.*

Whatever kamma I shall do, for good or for ill, of that I will be the heir.

Evam amhehi abhi^uṇha^um paccavekkhita^ubbam

Thus we should frequently recollect.