GBF Calendar

6 April, GBF Steering Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m. Monthly meeting, open to all who are interested. For directions, call Ding-Hao Ma:

9 April, Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Dharma talk by Katherine Thanas, head teacher at the Santa Cruz Zen Center.

10 April, Newsletter Committee Meeting, 7:30 p.m. For directions, call Mark Picciano:

23 April, Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Open discussion.

14 May, Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Peter Goetz and David Sunseri will share their experiences and memories of Zen Buddhist teacher Issan Dorsey-Roshi. Peter and David lived and practiced with Issan at Hartford Street Zen Center in the late 1980s.

28 May, Sunday Meeting, 10:30 a.m. Open discussion.


All GBF members are invited to recommend friends who might address our Sunday meetings. Subjects and speakers need to be appropriate, qualified, and of interest to our members. Please bring your suggestions to Ding-Hao Ma or David Holmes, who are now coordinating these meetings.

What GBF Means to Me
by Jesse

The question “What does GBF mean to me?” immediately raises additional questions such as “Who am I?” and “Why do I have an affinity for GBF?”

GBF is essentially concerned with the universal injunctions “to know thyself,” “to thine own self be true,” “the unexamined life is not worth living,” etc. The Buddha-Dharma unequivocally states that if we learn to relax (samatha), focus our attention (samadhi), and observe our own mental apparatus, we will discover exactly how our mental strategies generate and charge our egos; how we constantly change our marvelous Buddha nature into emotional reactions.

GBF is about encouraging and facilitating these abilities, so we can better see how our imagination creates the illusion that we are emotionally isolated and suffering alone.

I also participate in GBF so I can be around other gay men who, like me, are traveling the path of awakening self-awareness. The dharmic concept of interdependent origination explicitly shows that we are the company we keep. The words “company” and “companion” come from the Latin, panis, meaning “bread.” This is akin to the Latin word, pascere, which means “to nourish, pasture, feed.”

So the question is, who do we share bread with (companion)? What kind of company do we keep (kin)? What kind of pastures, fields, environment, or belief systems do we move in physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually? Do we nourish ourselves with quality food, quality exercise, quality thoughts, quality friends, quality reading, quality debates, quality meditation? GBF provides me ongoing opportunities to practice all of these things with my gay brothers.

“What GBF means to me” is seeing you at GBF meetings, hearing you authentic words, and getting in touch with the joy of “fellow-feeling” or camaraderie as we synergistically combine our energies in open discussion.

Answering the question, “What does GBF mean to me?” has proven a very profound and provocative mantra for me. It has helped me to clarify and refine my own beliefs, attitudes, and motives regarding GBF. I highly recommend its use to others.

I also encourage GBF members to put these thoughts on paper, reflect upon them, and then polish them into an article for the GBF newsletter. By doing so, you will be contributing to the GBF sangha in the revered tradition of dana (meaning, literally, “to donate or give”). You will also be helping with the spiritual evolution of GBF. In addition, the beneficial effects of following this process will enhance your own awakening.

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# The Local Dharma

## Ongoing Events

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<tr>
<td><strong>Sundays</strong></td>
<td>Introductory Open House. Meditation and study according to Tibetan Buddhist traditions, as taught by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. 9-noon. Free. Meditation instruction available. BSC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sundays</strong></td>
<td>Community Practice Day. Open house, sitting practice session, Shambhala practice session, and talk. Meditation instruction available. SFSC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sundays</strong></td>
<td>Weekly Vipassana Sitting with Eugene Cash. 45-minute silent meditation followed by discussion. 2150 Lyon St., SF. Call 979-4879, 7-9 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mondays-Saturdays</strong></td>
<td>Meditation and Services, 5-7 am. Zazen/Evening Service, 6 pm. Zazen instruction at 5 pm on Mondays. HSZC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesdays</strong></td>
<td>Sitting, 7-8pm. BSC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesdays</strong></td>
<td>Weekly Vipassana Sitting with Howard Cohn. 675 Dolores St. (at 20th St.), SF, 7:30-9:30 pm.</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesdays</strong></td>
<td>Shambhala Sitting Practice, 7-8pm. BSC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5 Wednesdays</strong></td>
<td>An Introduction to Buddhism, begins 5 Apr, $60. Low-income rates available, 7-9 pm. SFBC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursdays</strong></td>
<td>Weekly Vipassana Sitting with James Baraz. Albany United Methodist Church, 980 Stannage (at Marin), 2 blocks up from San Pablo, Berkeley. 7:30 pm-9:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5 Thursdays</strong></td>
<td>Afternoon Meditation Series, begins 6 Apr, $40. Low-income rates available, 2-4 pm. SFBC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursdays</strong></td>
<td>Sitting, 7-8pm. BSC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturdays</strong></td>
<td>Zazen &amp; Dharma Talk, 9 am. HSZC</td>
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## Special Events

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<tr>
<td>2 Apr</td>
<td>Vipassana Daylong with Jack Kornfield. 9 am-5 pm, $35 includes lunch. Contact code JK4. SR</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Apr</td>
<td>Gourmet Vegetarian Dinner. Monthly event for visitors and friends to join in a gourmet vegetarian menu. 7pm, $15. Call for reservations. NI</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Apr</td>
<td>Beginner’s Mind Class. Jill Grundberg leads this class. 7:30 pm, $25. SFSC</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Apr</td>
<td>A Short Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism: A Talk and Discussion. Ven. Carol Corradi and Amy Miller. An opportunity to engage in active discussion about the fundamentals of Tibetan Buddhism. 10 am-1 pm, $10 donation. TCL</td>
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<tr>
<td>10, 28 Apr</td>
<td>Lama Chopa/Tsog, 7 pm. TCL</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-13 Apr</td>
<td>Mastering Successful Work: Special Evening Series. 4 evening lectures, 7-8 pm, $5 per evening/$15 for the series. NI</td>
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<tr>
<td>11, 18, 25 Apr</td>
<td>Lam Rim Meditation, 7 pm. TCL</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-16 Apr</td>
<td>Spring Open Retreat. Fri., 8 pm-Sun., 4 pm. Open to all levels of experience and non-experience. $100. Low-income rates available. SFBC</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Apr-23 May</td>
<td>1995 Study Session II Call for details. GGF</td>
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<tr>
<td>21-23 Apr</td>
<td>Ordinary Magic: Introduction to Shambhala Training. Fri., 8 pm, at Omine Karate Dojo in San Bruno (call for location). Free Fri. eve. talk open to the public; $125 for the weekend. SFSC</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Apr</td>
<td>Emptiness and Interdependence. Ven. Robin Courdin leads this workshop at Vajrapani Institute in</td>
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What They Say About Aging and Death

compiled by Ron Ginsberg

What the Buddha said:

"Of all footprints, that of the elephant is supreme; Of all mindfulness meditations, That on death is supreme."

"Age is a true suffering."

What the great masters said:

"Life is impermanent, but that does not mean that it is not worth living. It is precisely because of impermanence that we value life so dearly. Therefore we must know how to live each moment deeply and use it in a responsible way. If we are able to live the present moment completely, we will not feel regret later... When we accept that all things are impermanent, we will not be incapacitated by suffering when things decay and die. We can remain peaceful and content in the face of change, prosperity and decline, success and failure." —Thich Nhat Hanh

"We plan many projects and activities for the coming days, months, and years. Although death is the only event that is certain to occur, we don't count it among our plans." —Kathleen McDonald

"I spent 20 years without thinking of practicing the Dharma and then I spent another 20 years thinking I would practice later and then I spent 10 years thinking about how I had missed the chance to practice the Dharma." —Gung-thang Rinpoche

"The birth of a man is the birth of his sorrow. The longer he lives, the more stupid he becomes, because his anxiety to avoid unavoidable death becomes more and more acute. What bitterness. He lives for what is always out of reach! His thirst for survival in the future makes him incapable of living in the present." —Chang Tzu

"Body. It is prey to illness and pain; when it does not accord with our wishes, we have grief and sorrow. Not understanding the natural aging and decay of the body, we suffer. We feel attraction or repulsion toward the bodies of others and are robbed of our peace." —Achaan Chah

Local Dharma
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Boulder Creek. 10 am-4 pm, $15 includes lunch. Call 408/338-6654.

29 Apr Attention, Awareness & Avowal: Buddhist Practice & Psychotherapy, led by Steve Weintraub. The work of psychotherapy in the context of the practice of Zen—through instruction and practice in meditation, talks, and discussion. 9 am-5 pm. $60 includes lunch. GGF

Drikung Kagyu Teachings with Ven. Khenpo Konchog Gyaltse Rinpoche. Call for details, 415 731-4426. SFSC.

Zen Hospice Project

Volunteer training begins on May 3

Volunteers provide practical, emotional, and spiritual support to men and women with cancer or AIDS. Each volunteer receives thorough training, is closely supervised, and is supported by a community of like-minded individuals. No prior experience in health care is necessary; we each have the capacity to empathetically care for another.

The program has its roots in Buddhist practice; however we wish to encourage the participation of a multicultural community. We welcome all spiritual traditions both for patients and volunteers.

The training begins a one-year program of service and is open to those able to make a commitment of five hours weekly and attend bi-monthly support meetings.

Coming Next Month: How do you feel about aging? We will print a sampling of reader comments in this newsletter. Please drop me a line: Ron Ginsberg, 492 Grove Street #3, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Training Dates
Wed. & Thu., May 3-4
6:45 pm-10 pm
Sat., May 6-7
10 am-7 pm
Wed. & Thu., May 10-11
6:45 pm-10 pm
Mon., May 15
5:45 pm-10 pm

Training fee: $150
Application deadline: April 17
Nursing certification: 30 CEUs
Call for an application or more information: 415/863-2310.

3
Moment to Moment:
The Crucible of Insight

by Alan Oliver

We use many paths to come to a better understanding of our lives. We meditate, read, listen to the dharma from teachers, and exchange insights in conversation with each other. All these insights are hollow if they do not help us live fully in the moment. Each moment is a lotus bud opening to full flower and a challenge to our Beginner’s Mind. How can we best engage the opportunity of each moment?

Thich Nhat Hanh, the well-known Vietnamese monk, uses the metaphor of following your monkey (ego) through the trees and forest, even though it is difficult to always keep him in sight. So you follow your “monkey” and surprise him in the moment. What then? The questions to pose in that moment are quite simple: What is my expectation? What judgment am I making? What desire is driving me? and What am I attached to?

The monkey ego is caught, for a moment, in the bright light of awareness, and because of that moment of insight we have less expectation, we make fewer judgments, we are driven by fewer desires, and we have less attachment. The more moments we create of this quality, the less suffering we will experience.

The key is to stop and ask yourself very simple questions about expectation, judgment, desire, and attachment. Metaphors can help you use these words. The following four metaphors have helped me remember them and focus on them moment to moment.

Expectations: A Cruel Master

Expectations are always with us and they drive us hard. Satisfy one expectation and ten more will crack the whip. Their presence in our lives leads us on, but constantly makes us dissatisfied and critical of how our lives are unfolding. They master us, but cannot satisfy us.

As we complain and feel bad about how our lives are not living up to our expectations, we are missing what is actually happening around us. We miss experiencing the weather as it is (yes, even the rain), meeting situations as they are, and looking for the small pleasures in our daily interactions.

Just fully tasting our food can be an intense experience without expectation.

So how can we get some control over and master our demanding expectations? Buddhism has a method that has been tried out and perfected for the past 2500 years. It is its use of meditation practice, where there is no expectation and nothing to gain.

Meditation encourages us to sit quietly and look inward during our daily lives, so that the outward demands of expectations can be balanced and controlled. Its daily practice can help to retire our own internal “expectation master” and remove his whip that drives us onward.

Judgments: A Bottomless Pit

Biblical wisdom warns us, “Judge not, that ye be not judged and in the judging found wanting.” Buddhism looks upon judgments as equally destructive, but from a more inward point of reference. How can we not judge others when our society encourages us to make such strong distinctions between right and wrong, and justice and injustice?

Certainly we in the gay community have our share of judgments to deal with. We talk about others when we visit gay bars and as we react to each other’s activities or lifestyles. These comments are sometimes mixed with corrosive personal judgments. We criticize our organizations in much the same way.

When our thinking becomes filled with these personal judgments, it can’t help but turn inward as well. As we judge, we dig a pit, and as we dig it, we find ourselves at the bottom of it. It’s difficult to separate ourselves from the judgments we make.

By making judgments, we insulate that no new data or insight can be received about that which we judge. We shut off the ever-changing light that could bring us new insight. We disappear from the light of openness and receptivity into the dark pit where we are sure and certain.

We are so sure, that often we miss a lot of what there is to see. We also forget that what we see is constantly changing. We shut down and close up. So the next time you make a judgment, stop, let it go in that moment, and look again. You may be surprised at what is really there.

Attachments: A Spiders Web

The “spider” has been weaving its web of attachments around us since we were born. It is the nature of the ego to be entangled in this web, aiding the spider in its lifelong task of making sure we are stuck. Eventually we disappear from sight beneath these attachments as they wrap themselves around us, allowing us no movement.

The path out of the web involves exposing one attachment after another to the light of the moment. Was it freely chosen, or is it someone else’s creation? As each strand is weakened through clear examination, it drops away and finally we can fly free.

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Desires: The Endless Thirst

To drink but not feel any relief from thirst—therein lies the dangers of desire. Desire only creates more desire and a greater thirst. It offers us no resolution or ending, just the eternal pursuit of even more. One desire becomes two, then six, then eighteen. Economically, our Western society is based on this premise.

This makes it difficult to find rest from moment to moment. It is not wrong to plan and arrange for things to happen, but once we become driven by the insistent thirst of desire we become lost. The only way to end the thirst is to bring it out into the light and expose it for what it is.

GBF Summer Retreat

The fourth annual Gay Buddhist Fellowship Summer Retreat will take place the weekend of July 15 and 16, 1995, at Vajrapani Institute in the Santa Clara Mountains.

This time of meditation and mindfulness will be a great opportunity for us to practice together in the quiet and beautiful redwood setting of Vajrapani. We held our summer retreat at this location two years ago, and it was a special experience for all who attended.

We will have more detailed information about this event during the next few months. If you would like to be on the planning committee for this retreat, please call Daishin David Sunseri at

AIDS Benefit Cancelled

The Gavin Harrison benefit for Buddhist AIDS Network (BAP) is canceled, at the author’s request, due to personal circumstances. Gavin sends his apologies and regrets having to cancel. If he visits the Bay Area, the BAP voice mail line will carry the details.

Volunteers Needed

GBF is growing in memberships and in the activities we sponsor. Help is needed in a variety of areas including:

1. practice (retreats and a number of other activities);
2. Sunday meetings;
3. newsletter;
4. voice mail/mailbox;
5. mailings (newsletter, fundraising letters, etc.);
6. database management;
7. treasury; and
8. steering committee.

If you can assist in any of these areas, either as a one-time effort or on an ongoing basis, please leave a message on GBF’s voice mail (415/974-9878).
GBF, 2261 Market St. #422, San Francisco, CA 94114.
For 24-hour information on GBF activities, call (415) 974-9878.
Submissions for newsletter publication can be sent on a MacIntosh disk (if possible), to: GBF Newsletter, Mark Picciano, Editor,