The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of Gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

The Four Immeasurables
Part Two of a Dharma Talk by Jim Wilson, Recorded June 13, 1999

The second Immeasurable is Love. We need to distinguish between that kind of exclusive love, the kind of fanatic love, say for one person, so popular in songs, and the kind of love that is being expressed here, based on the realization of the interconnectedness of all things. It is a non-discriminative love.

When the energy of love comes from the discriminative consciousness, that's when it becomes very destructive, because it is discriminative consciousness which seeks to separate. The other thing about discriminative love is that it clings. It doesn't want the object of love to change. It wants the object of love to endure. And that doesn't work [laughs], because everything changes. So that kind of discriminative love often is a source of a great deal of suffering.

Non-discriminative love is ultimately a love for all sentient existence. Love in this sense is wanting to take care, that emotion of wanting to take care for someone. So, a mother in her relationship to a child wants that child to be happy. If that child is crying, the mother responds to that. When we shift from the Compassion to the Love meditations it usually takes the form of "May all
GBF Committees
We always welcome and need interested participants, so please, JOIN US! Call the contact person on the committee, or talk to him (or anyone on that committee) at a GBF sitting or event. This is a great practice opportunity!

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The following committees are currently without chairs:
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being be happy,” and phrases that are similar to that. There's a lot of overlap between Compassion and Love.

“May you be well,”
“May you be happy,”
“May your days unfold in peace,”
“May your mind be free from care,”
“May your heart be serene.”

All these are expressions of this kind of contemplation into Love. Once again you start with yourself:

“May my days unfold with peace.”
“May I be happy.”
“May my days be free from care.”
“May my mind be at peace.”
“May my heart be serene.”

Once again, it's been my observation that a remarkable number of people have a hard time expressing love for themselves, but it's a very crucial step. If your heart is closed down for yourself, it's hard to open it to others.

Then, once again, you move on to benefactors, a very easy step. To your friends, to a neutral person. Once again, there's that pivot, expressing “May you be happy, may your days unfold with peace,” to a neutral person; it's very interesting to watch the mind, as it unfolds from friends to neutral people.

Then, expressing Love to difficult people, there's the challenge [laughs]. Expressing Love for all people, and expressing Love for all sentient existence.

“May all sentient existence, without exception, be happy.”
“May all sentient existence, without exception, have peace of mind, serenity of heart.”
“May their days unfold with ease.”

The third Immeasurable is Joy, often called Sympathetic Joy. This is an expression of happiness at other people's good fortune. This a wonderful antidote to that mind with which I'm sure we're all familiar, “They got that, why couldn't I have . . .” [Laughs.] That kind of spontaneous jealousy that arises: “They're richer, they're better looking, they have more . . .” That kind of comparison that the discriminative mind does all the time.

This kind of practice is meant to develop a habit of genuinely feeling good about other people's good fortune. You can express it very simply, and sometimes it is expressed very simply:

“May good fortune find you and stay with you all of your days.”

Once again, you begin with yourself:

“May good fortune find me,”
“May my life be useful.”
Dear Dharma Daddy

I just got through reading the latest issue of the GBF newsletter, and I fear you may have inadvertently caused undue concern among the Buddhist wanking community (which includes all of us I dare say), in your reply to K.R. You appear to be saying that masturbation is grounds for expulsion from the Sangha, that it is a parajika offense. If I remember correctly, there must be intention, orgasm and an orificial penetration to the depth of at least a sesame seed for there to be a number one parajika offense.

I believe that masturbation with the intention of procuring an orgasm is actually the first sanghadisesa which won't get you bounced, but will doubtless lead to much embarrassment. If all wankers got the boot, the Sangha would be a mighty small outfit. The Cullavagga's typology of orgasm procurement which occupies most of the discussion regarding that offense is a veritable wanker's encyclopedia, and it's evident that the Sangha fathers gave that one a lot of thought. But as you say to K.R., he's not a monk, so the rule is irrelevant to him.

Yours from frigid Madison,
Lenny.

Dear Lenny,

Dharma Daddy apologizes for, as it were, jerking his readers around. He wrote from memory, languishing in a Pacific paradise, separated from his significant other (his library) and unable to check his references. Fortunately, GBF Newsletter readers include those who are more learned than he.▼
Feeling Sympathetic Joy for someone, we don’t feel competitive or combative. We can all think of times when we’ve been genuinely elated at someone else’s good fortune. For example, when a good friend of ours tells us he has landed a perfect job, we feel wonderful about that. It’s very easy, you’ll sleep better, your days will be more easyful, and you’ll relate to people much more kindly when you can do this for all people.

David Holmes: The nature of the things that one is wishing for, for these others, come from the boundless well. There may be [an] apparent limit to the material goods and services on the planet, but Joy is infinite. The thing you’re wishing for them will liberate them from the activity that you find so disagreeable in them.

Jim Wilson: That’s an excellent point. These are not material goods. These are expressions, or facets of, the reality of interconnectedness. What we’re cultivating is the realization of the interconnectedness of all things. These are gateways to that understanding, which in that realm, as David said, is boundless. Absolutely unlimited, an endless supply. Go down to the Compassion Store—always full [laughs]!

The fourth Immeasurable is Equanimity. This is a very important one. It’s interesting to me that traditionally, they put it last. Equanimity has to do with acceptance. A lot of the agitation that occurs in the world, both in ourselves and in others, has to do with frustration over various things that have happened. The boundless Equanimity is to accept whatever has happened as having happened.

It is important to distinguish between equanimity and indifference because from the outside they often look the same. But it is really quite easy to comprehend the difference. Consider the sound of a bell. When the sound of a bell ceases we do not experience any regret, any sense of loss. That’s equanimity. Indifference is actually a form of rejection and a form of judgment; indifference means that we would rather something not be the case, it is not based on acceptance.

In traditional Buddhism, this is placed in the context of Karma and Rebirth. The traditional phrases associated with this are things like, “That Karma has manifested.” Or, “It may be unfortunate that that Karma has manifested, but it has.” Traditional Buddhism would see it as the confluence of conditions from past lives coming to fruition. That’s often very difficult for Westerners to get a good feeling for, but there are in western cultures certain contemplations which are very similar.

There is a famous Serenity Prayer, “May I have the wisdom to accept what I cannot change, and change what I can, and the wisdom to know the difference between those two.” The practice of equanimity is to become aware of one’s personal limitations—what one can do, what one cannot do—and that ultimately, that is okay. Whatever has appeared in this world, it’s not good, it’s not bad, it simply has arisen.

It’s a good cap to these other practices, because sometimes that Kwan Yin energy of constantly reaching out to help people can at times be very clumsy.
There’s a wonderful story—I heard it in Korea—about how Kwan Yin heard the cries of all the suffering beings in hell. Kwan Chien Pusa means “She Who Hears the Cries of the World.” So, she hears the cries of the suffering beings in hell, and she descends into hell, and she's overwhelmed by the suffering there, and she bursts into tears. Her tears wipe away the negative Karma of all the beings who dwell in the hell realms. And in an instant, they are reborn into good situations, because of Kwan Yin’s mercy. So for one instant, hell is empty. And in the next instant, it is full, because though Kwan Yin’s mercy and compassion is boundless, the capacity for ignorance and delusion is also boundless [laughs].

There’s another Bodhisattva in the Chinese cultural sphere call Ho Tei—he’s the fat one, the laughing Buddha, with his hands over his head. Ho Tei is Equanimity. Ho Tei is, “Can’t do anything about that! Oh, well!” “That’s a tough one! Gotta let that one go!” [Laughs.] The reason you see Kwan Yin and Ho Tei often paired is because they're a very good balance to each other. Kwan Yin is, “I want to fix this, my kid hurts, I want to reach out.” And Ho Tei is “Well, I guess they get to hurt themselves—I told them not to, but, hey!”

Another way you can look at Ho Tei, is that Ho Tei is Kwan Yin, when you have Compassion for yourself, in relationship to others. That’s why Ho Tai is a manifestation of Compassion. And it’s a wonderful image of this kind of Equanimity, because it’s not exactly a kind of stoic indifference. It’s more like, “Gosh, I wish I could figure out this situation, but, I can’t!” It’s a releasing, a letting go.

It's also an honoring of other people's journeys. Maybe you're right, maybe you do know a way out of their situation. It's possible that you have some insight that they don't have. But they have to learn that, whatever they're doing, they have to go through that, for whatever reasons.

So Ho Tei is the kind of Compassion that says, “Well, maybe I should step back from this. Maybe they really have to experience this. Maybe I shouldn't necessarily run interference in this case.” That's the Equanimity.

Equanimity for oneself, beginning with oneself, means letting go of one's judgments about past behavior. "Yeah, I did that. It's true." Acknowledging that that was done, and that that is a fact.

Then that same kind of Equanimity is extended to benefactors. "I thought they were perfect?" We all have that relationship with a teacher, or very good friend, or someone who's helped us—they loom very large in our consciousness, and then later we learn that maybe they weren't one hundred percent honest, or maybe they had other motives than the ones they were telling us. This is very good practice to extend to benefactors, especially when we find that their situation is more complex than we hoped for or imagined.

Extending Equanimity to our friends, because friendships have their ups and downs. Extending our Equanimity to a neutral person, then extending our Equanimity toward a difficult person. This is ironic, but most people find the difficult person easy in this context. "Oh well, I'll let that one go! They get to do that!" [Laughs.] Then, extending Equanimity to all people, and to all sentient existence.

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**GBF Homeless Project**

If you are available to volunteer your time to the Hamilton Family Center on the second Saturday of any month, please contact Clint Seiter at 415.386.3088. GBF volunteers prepare a dinner, funded by GBF, for homeless families.

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**Your Thrift Store Donations Earn Money For GBF**

GBF members can donate their quality cast-offs to the Community Thrift Store (CTS) and GBF will receive a quarterly check based on the volume of items sold. This is a great way to support our Sangha, and the community. Last year we received over $800 through members' generosity. Bring your extra clothing and other items to CTS at 623 Valencia St between 10am and 5pm, any day of the week. The donation door is around the corner on Sycamore Alley (parallel to and between 17th and 18th) between Valencia and Mission. Tell the worker you are donating to GBF. Our ID number is 40. Information 415.861.4910.

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**Local Dharma Centers**

A list of local Dharma centers is available on our website and as a handout at our Sunday sittings. We encourage members to explore what these Dharma centers can offer to their practice.
Meditation Group in Sonoma County
A Buddhist meditation group meets near the town of Sonoma every other Wednesday evening starting at 7pm, and GBFers are always welcome. The group now has gay and nongay practitioners. For more information, contact Bob Hass, 707.938.8868.

Ongoing Meditation Group On Monday Nights
Led by Jon Bernie, a meditation teacher in San Francisco with thirty years' meditation experience (including eleven years of Zen Buddhist training and seven years of Vipassana training). The group is free and open to all; donations gratefully accepted. Quaker Meeting House, 65 9th Street (between Mission & Market), 7–9pm. For more information, call Jon at 415.621.7314.

East Bay Meditation and Discussion Group
Wednesdays, 7–9pm: Meditation, tea, and discussion. For more information, call Howard, 510.649.1697.

GBF Website
www.gaybuddhist.org

Those are the four traditional practices, the Four Bramavaharas. There are several really good teachers in America today for whom this is their primary teaching. If this kind of practice appeals to you, I urge you to keep your eyes and ears open. Sharon Salzberg, this is primarily what she teaches, and she's a wonderful teacher of this kind of practice. Maha Gosananda is a Cambodian monk; I don't know if he gets to the Bay Area—I think he's mostly on the East Coast. This is his sole practice. This is what he does as a Buddhist monk.

I hope that we will all devote this infinite heart, and we will all awaken to Compassion, Love, Joy, and Equanimity—this afternoon, please! [Laughs.] And save all sentient beings from suffering.

Question: How do family members fit in to this?

It's interesting, because it seems that in traditional Buddhist cultures, families weren't such a problem. That's our Western Karma at this time. Some people I know make a separate category. You can be creative with this. I've often encountered people who will make a separate contemplation for their immediate family. Traditionally, it would fall under benefactors. Because your parents give birth to you, and they're benefactors in that sense. But many people have highly complex and problematic relationships to their parents and their siblings, their immediate family. For this reason, the emotions that come up when you're engaged in this kind of contemplation can prove problematic.

One of the traditional Metta contemplations is to treat all sentient beings as if they were your mother. Over and over again, I have people say, "Oh no, you wouldn't want me to do that!" [Laughs.]

Investigate it for yourself, [to see] if your family members fit in one of those categories. They might fall under friend for some people; it might be the difficult person for some people. For many people, I've found creating a separate category altogether, to extend Compassion and Love, Joy, and Equanimity, to the family, is very helpful.

Question: I have a fairly well-established sitting practice, and I've just been exposed to Metta practice in the last two years. How would you integrate it into one's daily practice?

If you have a home altar, and you do a daily sitting at the altar, I would conclude the sitting by reading one of those contemplations. I wouldn't do the contemplation while you're sitting. When the sitting is concluded, at the end, when your mind is very settled, I would read the contemplation, and integrate it in that manner. ▼
GBF Calendar
March 2000 San Francisco/Bay Area Events

Sunday Morning Sittings, 10:30am: San Francisco Buddhist Center, 37 Bartlett St, between 21st & 22nd, one block west of Mission St.

March 5 Discussion by Sangha members
March 12 Discussion by Sangha members
March 19 Mark Johnson*
March 26 Discussion by Sangha members

*In addition to Tai Chi instruction, Mark Johnson specializes in Qigong, which is self healing through movement; Feng Shui, which is the study of the energies of an area; the I Ching, which is China's ancient classic on how things change; and Chinese calligraphy. Mark has integrated these disciplines in creative ways for over 30 years. Since 1983, Mark has founded Integral Tao Centers in New Mexico, New York, and California. He is one of the founders of the National Qigong Association, and presently teaches and heals in Marin County and the San Francisco Bay Area.


Wednesday, March 8, 7:30pm: Steering Committee Meeting (open to all GBF participants), at the home of Larry White, 115 Sanchez St, Apt.5, SF, 415.626.8107.

Saturday, March 11, 3–6:30pm: Preparation and serving of dinner for homeless families, Hamilton Family Center, SF. Information: call Clint Seiter at 415.386.3088.

Sunday, March 26, 12 noon: Newsletter Mailing Party, after GBF Sunday sitting, 37 Bartlett Street, SF.

Saturday, March 25, 7pm: GBF Potluck Dinner at the home of Andrew Okumoto, 905 Burnett Avenue #3, SF. Information: 415.648.8868.


Buddhism at the Millenium's Edge:
series sponsored by SF Zen Center. Information (on any of the events below) 415.863.3133.

Friday, March 3, 7:30pm: "The Healing Power of Mindfulness," lecture by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin (at Geary), SF.

Saturday, March 5, all day: "The Heart of Practice," workshop led by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Green Gulch Farm, Highway 1, Marin County.

Saturday, March 18, 7:30pm: "Awakening to the Sacred," lecture by Lama Surya Das. Unitarian Center, 1187 Franklin (at Geary), SF.

Sunday, March 19, all day: "Creating a Daily Spiritual Life from Scratch," workshop by Lama Surya Das. City Zen Center, 300 Page Street, SF.
Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating kindness over the entire world:
Spreading upward to the skies,
And downward to the depths;
Outward and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down,
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.

—The Metta Sutra, from the Sutta Nipata, translated by Sharon Salzberg

How to Reach Us
GBF Sangha
Send correspondence and address changes to: GBF, 2215-R Market Street, PMB 456, San Francisco, California 94114. Send e-mail to <gbfsf@hotmail.com>. For 24-hour information on GBF activities or to leave a message: 415.974.9878.

GBF Newsletter
Send submissions to: Editor, GBF Newsletter, 2215-R Market Street, PMB 456, San Francisco, CA 94114. If possible, include a Mac disk in Word or as a text file along with your hardcopy. You may also send your submissions via e-mail with your documents attached to: <halburt@aol.com>. We do reserve the right to edit for clarity or brevity.