

Context

- **Series:** 40 Tenets of Plum Village, based on *Plum Village Looks at Vulture's Peak* by Thích Nhất Hạnh.
 - **Tenet 14:** "Mindfulness, concentration and insight include each other. All three have the capacity to bring joy, happiness and liberation."
 - Setting: July 2021, Ocean of Peace meditation hall, Deer Park Monastery.
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1. Nature of the Three Trainings

- **Mindfulness, concentration and insight** are called the *painless trainings*.
 - They bring freedom and joy and do not lead to attachment.
 - Unlike worldly pursuits, they cause no longing or craving; they are present-moment qualities, not distant goals.
- Right mindfulness is *not* a state to acquire later, but awareness of what is happening now.
 - To wish "if only I could be mindful" is already a wrong view.

2. Mutual Inclusion

- The three qualities are inseparable:
 - **Mindfulness** requires concentration to stay with the breath or sensations.
 - **Concentration** stabilises mindfulness.
 - **Insight** arises naturally when awareness deepens (e.g. noticing the changing sensations of breathing).
- Insight is not remote or complex; recognising "I have two healthy legs" is already an insight and a source of happiness.

3. Mindfulness and Suffering

- Plum Village precepts begin with *awareness of suffering*, not merely prohibitions.
- Understanding the suffering caused by actions (e.g. habitat destruction) naturally leads to compassionate behaviour.
- Mindfulness without insight into suffering is incomplete.

4. Mindfulness as a Path, Not a Tool

- Teaching mindfulness in contexts such as the military is valid only if it includes concentration and insight.
- Mindfulness cannot be reduced to a performance aid or stress-relief technique; right mindfulness always reveals the consequences of harm.

5. Aimlessness and Present Joy

- True practice is *aimless*; the "goal" is inherent in the practice.
- Joy and happiness arise from mindfulness itself, not from achieving external results.
- Concentration and insight similarly produce joy without dependence on possessions or status.

6. Community and Collective Awakening

- Thích Nhất Hạnh envisioned **collective awakening** as essential for the 21st century.
- Solar panels or new technologies are not enough; the planet needs resilient communities of happy practitioners.
- Practising together strengthens insight, supports transformation, and offers refuge in a time of ecological and social crisis.

7. Taking Refuge and Letting Go of False Security

- People seek stability in governments, media, possessions, or personal identity.
- Such refuges are unreliable and impermanent.
- Mindfulness reveals these habits of clinging and invites refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—living awareness and community.

8. Habits of Suffering

- We can become attached even to our suffering because it is familiar and predictable.

- Mindfulness exposes these conditioned reactions and allows release.

9. Identity, Knowledge and Grasping

- We construct identities (roles, achievements) and then suffer when reality contradicts them.
- Knowledge itself can become an obstacle when it reinforces the sense of a fixed self.
- Buddhist psychology teaches the *non-existence of the grasper and the grasped*—no separate subject or object, only processes and patterns of neural activity.

10. Embracing the Wounded Child

- Inside each person is a “wounded child” carrying unresolved pain.
- Mindfulness invites us to hold this child with care rather than hiding anger, fear or despair.
- True happiness comes from understanding and embracing these difficult emotions.

11. Insights on Non-Self

- Direct experience shows no fixed boundary between inside and outside.
- When concepts of body and self fall away, we see that we are “life without limit,” interconnected with all beings and the earth.

12. Nourishing the Soil of the Mind

- Mental formations are like an orchard: wholesome seeds must be watered and the soil tended.
- Consumption of media or conversations can either nourish joy or water seeds of despair; skilful “gardening” protects the mind.

13. Storytelling and Culture

- Oral traditions and communal stories sustain culture more resiliently than books or the internet.
- Modern society often replaces shared stories with individualistic “hero” myths, weakening community bonds.
- Dharma practice revives collective storytelling and resilience.

Closing Reflection

Mindfulness, concentration and insight are not sequential steps but interwoven aspects of a single practice.

They generate present-moment happiness, reveal suffering, and dissolve the illusion of a separate self. Through community, aimlessness and care for our inner “soil,” they offer the deepest refuge and a path of collective liberation.