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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Published by

Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia.

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Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University

World Fellowship of Buddhists Regional Centre

May You Be Well and Happy

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Summary

Buddhist practitioners can make a difference in improving their happiness and wellbeing by writing and following a daily and weekly Dhamma Activity Plan.

The activities can include reading Buddha Teachings, Buddhist chanting and some daily meditation. A sample Daily and Weekly Dhamma Plan are provided in the article.

Additionally, meritorious activities are recommended, such as helping out at a Buddhist temple or Buddhist Centre. Some examples of such activities are also listed.

How to Start Your Buddhist Practice

What are the first practical steps you can do to really make a difference in improving your happiness and wellbeing through practicing Buddhism?

The first step is to start a daily Dhamma practice of your own. This should include the basic fundamental daily practices such as formal chanting and meditation and a weekly plan to make merit specifically for the purpose of improving your mind.

This relates to implementing the components of your practice in a planned way rather than leaving it up to the whims of how you are feeling on any particular day. We all lead busy lives. Unless something is planned in this way there will always be a myriad of other things to do before we sit down and do something for our inner development. Therefore, you need to decide that doing something every day for your own wellbeing and happiness is an important priority worth making space for in your life.

This is renunciation, this is letting go. We make a choice to let go of a few things of lesser value to us to make space to bring something of greater meaning and benefit into our life.

Make time every day to read some Buddha Teachings, do Buddhist chanting and some meditation. If you usually get up at 6.30 am, get up at 6.15am and use the extra 15 minutes per day for your practice. Make some time in your life to do this. Gradually this makes the kamma to get a bit more time, and so on.

So below we have provided a planning sheet for you to write your daily practice. You start by deciding how many minutes each day you will set aside for your inner work.

Please remember there's no point in doing any of these practices unmindfully or without volition, like you are on automatic pilot.

Below is listed a few practices you can do anytime during the day or night, while you are driving your car for example, or just when you have a moment to spare.

- * Sit with awareness of your body and have a cup of tea or other drink with appreciation of your comfort, of the quiet moment you have, and the taste of the drink.
- * Do something kind for your Mum or Dad, or your partner, to make them happy.
- * Put your mind into the present moment and recollect the five precepts with volition to keep them, not as a ritual on automatic pilot. Each time you do that correctly it produces clean wholesome energy in your mind.
- * Find something which instantly lightens you up or makes you laugh.
- * You can chant a Buddhist mantra.
- * Send loving kindness to other beings, then send loving kindness to yourself.
- * Set a time period aside, such as when you are driving for example, to stay mindful of your body, say for five minutes.

My Daily Dhamma Plan

..... minutes per day.

	Daily Practice	Minutes	Times
1	Daily Chanting with Mindfulness		
2	Daily Offerings with Intention		
3	Studying Dhamma		
4	Meditation on the Breath		
5	Sending Metta		
6	Mindfulness in Action		
7	Write Down Your Wins		
8			
9			

Next you have your Weekly Dhamma Plan to make sure every week you make some good causes or merit toward your mind's improvement.

We have discussed how important it is to make new powerful good causes or merit to fuel your own development. This is the factor that provides clean mental energy and new nutrients for your mind. How can you do this on a regular basis?

We always recommend practitioners include helping out at a Buddhist temple or Buddhist centre because this is exactly what temples are designed for.

If you are sincere about learning and practicing Buddhism well supporting your learning by attending a Buddhist centre is as indispensable as attending university is to studying medicine or law, for example. There are so many ways mixing with other people who also practice Buddhism benefits students, particularly for the first few years until they really get proficient in practice. Apart from any formal classes that are given, many conversations you'll hear are to do with understanding yourself better and learning more skilful ways to improve your personal development.

It usually takes a couple of years for most students to get their Buddhist practice well established just as it would take a couple of years to develop the basics skills of playing a new musical instrument.

We have listed below some examples of the type of activities you can help out with at a Buddhist Temple and some of them you can do at home. These activities can all be interesting and fun to do. Use your existing skills to make merit and train yourself in new skills you can use to help your temple.

- * help cataloguing books in a Buddhist library
- * help recording, transcribing and editing Buddhist teachings
- * help in the temples garden
- * help with secretarial work
- * help manage websites
- * help preparing and cooking meals
- * help with fundraising
- * help in the office with filing or photocopying
- * help with building and maintenance work
- * help with transport for Buddhist Monks and Nuns

My Weekly Dhamma Plan

..... hours per week.

	Weekly Practice	Minutes	Times
1	Attend a Buddhist Talk or Teaching		
2	Attend a Buddhist Meditation Class		
3	Attend a regular Buddhist Puja Ceremony		
4	Offering your help at a Buddhist Centre		
5	Helping a Buddhist centre from home		
6	Make offerings to Monks or Nuns		
7	Help Monks or Nuns according to their needs		
8	Helping your Mother or Father		
9			
10			

All these suggestions are working at building your happiness from the absolute reality point of view, by using the Law of Kamma to create the causes for your improvement. It changes your life for the better, but more essentially, it changes you for the better.

You become the new causes you have made. Making the biggest improvement of yourself depends on how much you can increase your store of the right types of good kamma and how well you put your new learning into practice.