LIVING IN THE MOMENT
A PEACEMAKER TEACHES THE ART OF EXPERIENCING EVERY SECOND'S MIRACLES

THINK about moments of arrival in your life. The arrival of a child. The arrival of a friend whom you haven't seen in years. Or your arrival at your parents' house after an arduous plane trip -- walking into their kitchen, smelling all the familiar smells and stepping into their embraces.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Zen Buddhist monk who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by Martin Luther King Jr. a quarter century ago, teaches that every moment in your life...every breath...every step you take...should be consciously experienced as a moment of joyous arrival.

He is 67 years old now and somewhat frail. He stepped away from the headlines long ago.

But as he completes a two-month tour of the United States, Nhat Hanh (''Thich'' is an appellation given to all Vietnamese Buddhist monks and nuns) finds increasingly large, enthusiastic crowds of people flocking to his talks and retreats.

In the next week, 10,000 people will attend events in Watsonville, San Jose and elsewhere in the Bay Area. They will come to learn the practice of ''mindfulness'' that Nhat Hanh discusses in a number of his most popular books. It is a means for cultivating awareness of the ''multitude of miracles and wonders around us'' in every instant, as Nhat Hanh puts it, but that people are often too distracted to see.

He offers an example.

''A beautiful child is coming, smiling her beautiful smile,'' he says quietly to the 450 people seated in front of him, all attending a five-day retreat with Nhat Hanh this week in the Santa Cruz Mountains above Saratoga.

''She needs some of our attention, but we are not there. We are lost in our thoughts about our projects, anger, regrets over the past, worries about the future. And we miss the beautiful smile of our child in a state of forgetfulness. We miss everything. Life is not possible,'' he whispers.

''And so the practice of mindfulness is to bring us back to life. Our appointment with life is in the present moment,'' he continues, seated lotus style in his brown monk's robes. ''If we miss the appointment, life is not for us.'' (hbox)

From time to time, Nhat Hanh pauses to listen to the sound of a bell. It is rung by one of the Buddhist nuns who have accompanied him from Plum Village, the small monastery in the Bordeaux region of France where Nhat Hanh has lived in exile from Vietnam for 27 years. The bell is a reminder for everyone to return to the present moment by focusing on his or her breathing.

''Enjoy breathing,'' Nhat Hanh tells his listeners.

The Buddha, who lived in the sixth century B.C., spoke of mindfulness in the ancient sutras, which recount his sermons and dialogues. And Zen, a practice of Buddhism that originated in India and spread throughout China, Southeast Asia and Japan, has long emphasized the beauty of living in the
present moment, fully appreciative of "the heart of reality," to use Nhat Hanh's words.

Zazen, the sitting meditation at the center of Zen practice, was for centuries left to monks who lived in seclusion. But in recent years, Zen has become increasingly popular among lay people in the West, and Nhat Hanh has become one of its most celebrated exponents, though his teachings span a number of streams of Buddhist thought.

Nhat Hanh not only brings Buddhist teaching to working men and women, but also encourages them to bring children to his retreats -- they traipse in and out of his talks in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

He demystifies zazen by teaching breathing exercises that are intended to root practitioners in the here and now and to instill an understanding of the preciousness of every breath. This understanding, he tells his listeners, allows each "to touch the fact that you are alive ... the greatest miracle."

From this, he sees a ripple effect: individuals come to look deeply into the beauty of their own lives, and all the reality that surrounds them. As these people "touch peace" inside themselves, they are able to reconcile more easily with other individuals. Then through mindful practice, he explains, sitting in his small room at the retreat, entire communities and nations can learn to look into the beauties of their own traditions, to acknowledge the "jewels" of other traditions, and to reconcile in times of tension or even war.

This is the transformative power of mindfulness, says this optimistic monk whose pacifism during the Vietnam War earned him disapproval and threats from all sides in the conflict and resulted in his ongoing exile.

"He was formed by his experiences during the Vietnam conflict," says Jack Lawlor, a Chicago attorney who was ordained a Zen lay teacher by Nhat Hanh last year and flew in for the retreat. "His teaching is like a beautiful lotus that has survived the flames and violence of that tragedy."

Nhat Hanh became a monk at the age of 16 when Vietnam was still under French Colonial rule. One of his inspirations was a 17th-century Zen master named Doc The whose writings taught Nhat Hanh dozens of short verses, known as gathas, to serve as reminders during the course of the day -- much like the sound of the bell -- to return to the present moment and the "sun of awareness."

As the war in Vietnam intensified and American involvement escalated, Nhat Hanh became a formulator of "engaged*Buddhism,"*which teaches that there is no peace for any individual if all people are not at peace. He called for a cessation of all hostilities and the reconciliation of the warring factions. In 1964 he founded a group called the School of Youth for Social Service, which rebuilt villages destroyed by American bombing. One village, Tra Loc, was rebuilt three times.

In 1966, Nhat Hanh visited the United States and met with Martin Luther King Jr. His effect on King's views about the war was profound. In nominating Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize the next year, King called the monk "a holy man, for he is humble and devout. He is a scholar of immense intellectual capacity. His ideas for peace, if applied, would build a monument to ecumenism, to world brotherhood, to humanity."

When King denounced the war in 1967, Nhat Hanh was at his side. The monk ultimately went on to lead the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation to the Paris peace talks in the early 1970s.
Though his energies have more recently been focused on quietly spreading the practice of mindfulness, he continues to engage in occasional public peace activities.

During a march for nuclear disarmament in New York City in June 1982, the police noticed that a long segment of the procession had rather suddenly come to a near halt. Trying to locate the cause of the disruption, the police noticed that a small Buddhist monk was walking with slow deliberate steps at the head of the slowly moving contingent. It was Thich Nhat Hanh.

He was practicing "walking meditation," breathing in with every step of his left foot, breathing out with every step of his right foot, always "kissing the earth" with the soles of his feet.

"There was a gap of about half a mile between us and the marchers in front of us," recalls Arnold Kotler, a Zen Buddhist monk who was there that day and who now directs a Berkeley publishing house, Parallax Press, that publishes many of Nhat Hanh's books. "As I recall, the AFL-CIO marching band was behind us." The band members and all the marchers behind them had reflexively fallen in step with the meditative gait of Nhat Hanh. (hbox)

It's pitch black outside at 6:30 a.m. Inside the unlit meeting hall under the redwoods, a couple hundred people are practicing sitting meditation. Breathing in, breathing out. They are silently reciting some of the short gathas that Nhat Hanh has taught them to help concentrate completely on each inhalation and exhalation. The only sound comes from the chirping of one very loud cricket. After about 10 minutes, the sound of the cricket is joined by another sound: the sharp inhalations and exhalations of a young man, seated in a wheelchair, who is sucking air from a plastic respirator tube. As he meditates in the darkness, his presence seems an unintended commentary on the preciousness of every breath.

At 9:30 a.m., 450 people crowd into the meeting hall to listen to one of Nhat Hanh's dharma talks on Buddhist teachings.

A bell rings.

Then Sister Jina Van Hengel, a nun from Plum Village, stands on the stage at the front of the room and smiles, saying, "Please enjoy your breathing." She says it matter-of-factly, the way a waiter or waitress in a restaurant might urge customers to "please enjoy your meal."

Moments later, Nhat Hanh sits in a lotus position -- he looks utterly comfortable with his back straight, his legs crossed beneath him -- and begins to tell a story to the two dozen children sitting around him on the stage.

"When I was 9," he says quietly, in slightly accented English, "I happened to see the drawing of a Buddha on the cover of a Buddhist magazine. The Buddha was sitting in the grass, smiling beautifully, relaxingly. I was so impressed. Around me at that time, people did not look very peaceful. And as a little boy, 9 years old, I wanted to become someone like the Buddha, just by looking at a picture like that.

"About 2 1/2 years later," he continues, "I had the opportunity to climb a mountain in the northern part of my country, Vietnam. I was very excited because I had learned there was a hermit living on the top of the mountain -- someone who is practicing to become a Buddha . . . to be calm, relaxing and peaceful. I wanted to meet him, though I did not tell that to the other schoolchildren.

"We started to climb in the very early morning. At that time, I did not
know anything about walking meditation, so we walked so fast, and we climbed very quickly, and we got very tired halfway to the top of the mountain and we drank all our water. Now I know so much better how to climb a mountain without getting tired.''

The audience laughs, then Nhat Hanh goes on.

''I was only 11 1/2, and my greatest disappointment when we reached the top was that the hermit was not there. In my little head, I thought a hermit was someone who wanted to live alone and did not want to see a huge crowd of schoolboys and schoolgirls, and I thought he may be somewhere there, hiding himself. So while the other schoolboys unpacked for our picnic, I set out alone to find the hermit...''

''A few minutes later, I heard the sound of water dripping. It was a very beautiful sound, and suddenly I had the idea to follow the sound. And about five minutes later, I discovered a well, a natural well made of stone, and the water was very limpid, clear. Very inviting. So I knelt down, and I began to scoop the water with my hands. You cannot imagine my happiness. I was so satisfied. It was so delicious. It was a feeling of bliss that you don't desire anything more. I had the idea that the hermit had transformed himself into a well in order to meet me privately.''

Now he skips across the decades to bring the story up to date.

''Last year, a group of us went to Russia, to Moscow... and to Poland and to Prague, a city so beautiful. And we practiced touching the city with our mindfulness. Suddenly, I heard the church bell ringing. I had heard the church bell before, hundreds of times, but suddenly I heard another sound, too -- the sound of the dripping water. And I felt I was able to touch the soul of ancient Europe. I had lived in Europe for many years, but finally had been able to feel her soul through the sound of the bell.''

He pauses. Someone on the stage rings a small bell. But for its sound, there is silence in the hall. Then Nhat Hanh tells the children and, through them, everyone in the room: ''You may have seen your beautiful well. You may already have heard the sound of dripping water. And the image and the sound are still alive in you, and you should try to touch it.'''
When you can LIVE fully in the present moment, when we can enjoy and appreciate the JOURNEY, our life becomes a beautiful destination, and end in itself. The Power Of The Present Moment “Living In The Now” Inspiring Speech. Download or Stream to any device, worldwide: iTunes | GooglePlay | Spotify | AppleMusic | AmazonMP3. The Present Moment is all you ever need. Click to Tweet. Transcript: The Power Of The Present Moment “Living In The Now.” This precious PRESENT MOMENT To be aware of all the miracles that are around you and indeed a PART of you, right now. All unhappiness is formed when we take our being away from the present moment. Stress, disappointment and anger when we think about events of our PAST that we have no control over right now. Living in the moment and cherishing them is the only way to enjoy your life to the fullest and it is the key to real happiness and peace. Being mindful of everything we do could give us pure and true bliss with ourselves, others, and the world around us. 73 Live in the Moment Quotes. Delight yourself with this collection of quotes about living in the moment that will surely bring things into better perspective.

1. “The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.” – Abraham Maslow
2. “Do not dwell in the past; do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on what is happening.” – Henry David Thoreau
3. “At some point you just have to let go of what you thought should happen and live in what is happening.”
4. “Living in the moment is being aware of the moment we are in. If our minds are in the past or future, we are not truly alive in the present.” – Satsuki Shibuya
5. “The art of life is to live in the present moment.” – Emmet Fox
6. “You have to let go of the past, in order to live in the present.” – Anonymous
7. “The past is gone, the future is not yet here, and if we do not go back to ourselves in the present moment, we cannot be in touch with life.” – Thich Nhat Hanh
8. “Do not dwell on the past, do not dream of the future, concentrated the mind on the present moment.”