

## **Session One: The Energies of the Buddha**

We all have the power to connect with the wonders of the present moment and, with practice, we can come to realize that everything we are looking for is available to us in the here and now. By generating mindfulness and developing our concentration, we can build the insight necessary to open ourselves to the wonders of life. This session begins with an opportunity for you to connect with the sangha, or community of practitioners, in generating collective mindfulness by joining in the practice of reciting the name of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara. After the energy of mindfulness is established, we will begin to explore and deepen our understanding of the connected nature of the energies of the Buddha: mindfulness, concentration, and insight.

In this video selection, Thich Nhat Hanh, or Thay, describes the process of chanting the name of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, and how we can use this chanting practice as a way to generate the collective energy of mindfulness while connecting with our suffering, the suffering of others, and the suffering of the world. By connecting mindfully with our suffering and the suffering in the world, we stop our habit of running and create the opportunity to touch the wonders of the present moment.

**VIDEO:** “Connecting with Our Suffering”

### **Questions for Reflection:**

How does understanding our own suffering make it easier to understand the suffering of another person?

Why is our normal reaction to suffering to run away from it? In which ways do you run from your suffering?

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Chanting the name of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is an opportunity for you to practice generating compassion within yourself. Assume your preferred meditation posture or a comfortable seated position in a chair and listen, allowing the collective energy of the sangha to penetrate your body.

If you would like to follow Thay’s recommendations for how to use this chant as a practice to touch suffering, they are as follows:

- The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara’s name will be repeated three times. These three repetitions of the chant will represent one round, or time through the practice.
- In the first round of chanting the name of Avalokiteshvara: get in touch with the suffering inside of you.

During the second round of chanting the name of Avalokiteshvara: get in touch with the suffering of others and those close to you.

For the third round of chanting the name of Avalokiteshvara: get in touch with the suffering in the world.

- Chant these three repetitions a number of times in order to allow you ample opportunity to practice.

- If you would like to chant along, here are the lyrics (remember, three cycles of the Bodhisattva's name represent one round of practice):

*Na-mo 'Va-lo-ki-tesh-va-ra-ya*

**VIDEO:** "Avalokiteshvara Chant"

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Bringing the mind back to the body reestablishes you in the here and now. In this state, you can touch the wonders of the world instead of being lost in thought and trapped in fear and sorrow. The deep practice of mindfulness—and bringing the mind home to the body—allows you to develop the insight to know that everything you are looking for is already here for you. In this selection, Thay describes this process of freeing ourselves with the simple act of "one in-breath, and one out-breath."

**VIDEO:** "Bringing the Mind Home to the Body"

### **Questions for Reflection:**

What does it mean to "get in touch with the Living Buddha"?

How does the practice of meditation allow you get in touch with the Buddha?

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By reestablishing yourself in the present moment through the energy of mindfulness, you are beginning a process that calls on the three energies of the Buddha: mindfulness, concentration, and insight. These energies open you to the richness of the world and allow you to discover the wonders available to you. Here, Thay will explain these three energies and how they work together for your transformation and healing.

**VIDEO:** "Mindfulness, Concentration, and Insight"

**Questions for Reflection:**

What is mindfulness?

What is concentration?

What is insight?

What is the relationship between mindfulness, concentration, and insight? How are they related, and how does each support the others?