

An Invitation to

A Year of Living Mindfully

A 12-Month Inquiry into the Nature of Awakened Heart and Mind

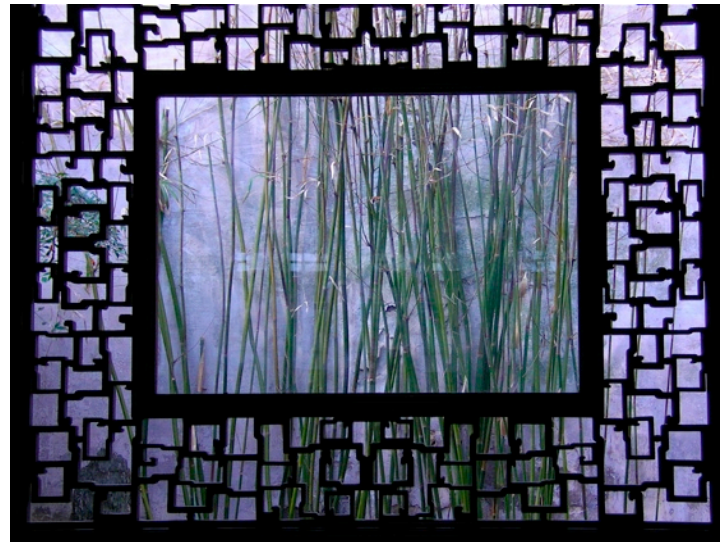
Led by Jonathan Foust

Starting in April, 2011

The happiest seasons of our lives often correlate to when we maintain a dedicated focus on what most matters to us.

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you held consistent focus on mindfulness and kindness for a full year?

If you are interested in bringing alive more awareness in your daily life through meditation, study and interpersonal support, please read on.



Life in the Fast Lane

Unless we live in a monastery or have managed to build real simplicity into our lifestyle, it's easy to forget what's most important and get enmeshed in the world of demands, stress and the impulse to go faster and do more. The result is often a blend of anxiety, low energy, self doubt and a vague sense that we're missing something.

The more we feel separate from a full sense of presence, the feelings of unworthiness and fear begin to dominate our life experience. We forget the mystery, love and awareness that is our source.

The Alchemy of Transformation

How do we awaken full and compassionate presence? How do we live skillfully in the world?

Great traditions through the ages suggest the following:

Daily Practice
Times of Retreat
Like-Minded Community
Contemplative Study
Service

These elements are the core of the Year of Living Mindfully course.



Key Elements of the Program

The Year of Living Mindfully Program combines these domains of spiritual life in an integrated format designed to support you in cultivating an awakened heart and mind.

Practice. You commit to a formal daily practice of mindfulness and heart meditations.

Retreats. Two weekend and three daylong retreats will help deepen your practice.

YLM participants also have priority to register for Jonathan's public daylong retreats. These retreats are offered to YLM participants on a dana (donation) basis.

Classes. Monthly gatherings explore the dharma and practice in daily life.

Community. Mutual dharma inquiry includes practices and exercises designed to bring you into deeper self-awareness and connection. Monthly small group meetings help keep your practice inspired.

Inquiry. We'll cover specific aspects of classical Buddhism and explore how the teachings and practices can impact our daily life and relationships.

Service. An ongoing inquiry into how we each more effectively serve from fullness.

Supportive Mindfulness Methodology: Focusing

We will spend the first segment of the program learning and practicing Focusing. Focusing is a skill you'll carry with you for the rest of your life. It's a profound training in learning how to investigate the felt sense in the body and can be a deeply transformative tool.

Focusing comes from the pioneering work of psychologist and philosopher Eugene Gendlin at the University of Chicago, where he collaborated with Carl Rogers. He and colleagues studied why some psychotherapy clients improved while many others did not. It was found that successful therapy was not determined by the therapist's technique, orientation or the kind of problem being discussed.

What did make a difference was what the client was doing internally.

Successful clients were regularly checking inside themselves for a whole bodily felt sense of their situation. These findings led to much further research in the last fifty years and to exact understandings about how this process works.

More than just being in touch with your feelings, Focusing cultivates wakefulness and a sense of being vibrantly alive and at home in your body.

You can learn more about Focusing at my website, www.jonathanfoust.com and read about the research and process models at the Focusing Institute website, www.focusing.org.



*For students seriously studying the Dharma, you can ...
find no better preparation than to learn Focusing.*

-Roshi Robert Aitkins

Dharma Study

Main Topics and Themes

Living in the Body. Training in the first foundation is the ground of our year-long program and includes instruction in mindfulness of sensation, movement and the practice of Focusing. Focusing is a mind / body practice that is a cornerstone to developing mindfulness practice. More than just being in touch with your feelings, Focusing cultivates wakefulness and a sense of being vibrantly alive and at home in your body. Roshi Robert Aitkins was quoted, “For students seriously studying the Dharma, you can ... find no better preparation than to learn Focusing.” (To read more about Focusing, check out www.jonathanfoust.com.)

Awakening the Heart. Key to opening the heart is the willingness to explore obstacles to cultivating greater intimacy. In structured settings and homework assignments you will investigate the nature of self and other and how to skillfully work with difficult emotions. You will learn communication tools that will enhance self awareness and transform your relationships with others. We will explore topics such as the Bodhisattva path of cultivating compassion, generosity and forgiveness.

Awakening the Mind. Delving into meditation practice includes both the application and understanding of skillful means and also directly investigating the nature of mind and the meaning of freedom. Through talks, discussion and practice, we will explore the Four Foundations of Awareness, The Three Characteristics of Reality and such topics as Freedom, Liberation and Nibbana.

Awakening in Relationship. The Buddha taught extensively about the power of community and seeing others as a reflection of oneself. Individually and as a group, we will explore how we can cultivate greater empathy, compassion and kindness as an expression of the awakened heart.

Cultivating Skillful Means. The Buddha taught extensively about how to live skillfully. We will inquire into what it means to integrate into our daily lives the teachings from the eight-fold path: cultivating Wisdom (Right View and Right Intention), Ethical Conduct (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood) and Mental Discipline (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.) We will explore how to apply the dharma to real world issues such as sex, money, work and relationships.

Cultivating Creativity, Imagination and Joy. Applying mindfulness principles is said to result in the diminishment of greed, hatred and delusion. It is also reported to increase creativity, imagination, joy and new possibilities. A key element of this program is exploring creative expression and what it means to live a fully lived life.

Prerequisites

This program is limited and is designed for mature and motivated participants want to deepen their practice and more fully integrate the principles of the teachings of the Buddha into their lives. While this training is not limited to just advanced practitioners, a sincere commitment to daily practice and full participation is essential. The following are highly recommended:

- At least 2 years of regular meditation practice
- Attending a weekly class or introductory series
- At least one residential retreat

Admission to the program is subject to approval of your application. An application can be found at www.jonathanfoust.com under 'Media and Downloads.'

Number and Type of Meetings

In addition to daily practice and contemplative study, the program is comprised of:

- Two weekend retreats
- Twelve evening study groups comprised of presentations, discussion and practice
- Three day-long retreat / workshops
- Monthly Focusing session with a fellow student
- Two private sessions with Jonathan

This chart shows our activities through the year. A week-long residential retreat during the year is strongly encouraged.

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Wknd 4.15-17	Daylong 5.8				Daylong 9.10				Daylong 1.14			Wknd 4.6-8
Evening 4.27		Evening 6.1, 29		Evening 8.3, 31	Evening 9.28		Evening 11.2, 30		Evening 1.4	Evening 2.1	Evening 3.7, 28	
Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner	Dharma partner
Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group	Small group
Spring Retreat 4.29-5.6						Fall Retreat 10.7-14		New Year's Retreat 12.27-1.1				Spring Retreat 4.22-29
	1-1 w/ Jonathan									1-1 w/ Jonathan		

Retreat and Class Locations

Retreats, classes and other gatherings will be in the DC area.

Program Tuition

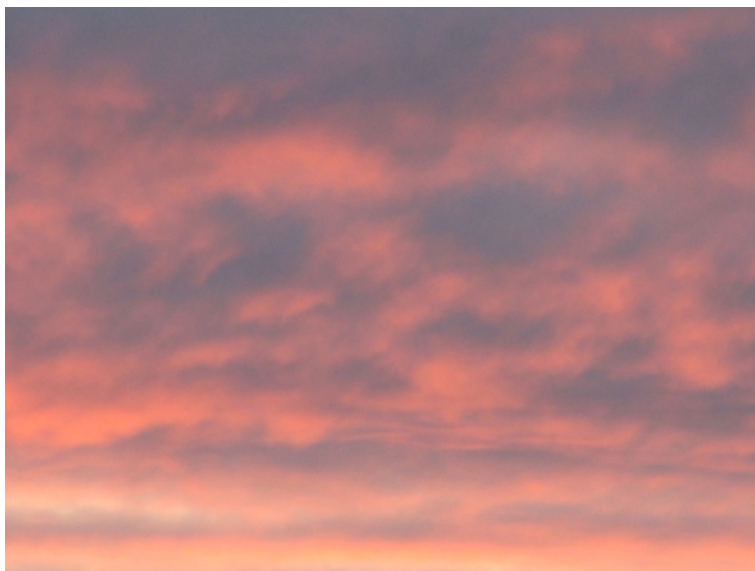
Tuition is \$1850. This amount is exclusive of expenses associated with the highly recommended week-long retreat.

Next Steps

Email me at info@jonathanfoust.com to let me know of your interest and to have me directly email you an application. You can also download an application at www.jonathanfoust.com by clicking on the link for 'Media and Downloads.' If you'd like to be on a mailing list for more information, sign up at www.jonathanfoust.com. Click 'join our mailing list' and then point your browser to the appropriate list. I'll have more information on request.

Applications are due by March 15, 2011. Please contact me directly if you would like an extension.

Thank you for your interest and blessings in your practice!



Frequently Asked Questions

Let me start by asking what this program ISN'T.

The Year of Living Mindfully is **not**:

- A academic course studying and analyzing Buddhist philosophy
- A book club where you've got tons of reading to keep up with
- A series of lectures where you passively take in information
- Something you'll get graded on

So then, what **IS** it?

The Year of Living Mindfully **is**:

- A sustained, sincere exploration of what it means to cultivate an awakened heart and mind
- Experiences and inquiries designed to cultivate and deepen a rich and alive meditation practice
- Being part of a like-minded sangha (a community of spiritual friends)
- Learning techniques and practices that enrich our capacity to be more conscious and alive in our relationships
- Deepening our understanding of Buddha dharma through experiential practice and dialog

Focusing is mentioned a lot in the course description. What is this Focusing technique?

Focusing is a mind/body process developed over thirty years ago by Dr. Eugene Gendlin. He was working at that time with Carl Rogers at the University of Chicago. After studying thousands of hours of clients working with therapists, he discovered it was not the skill of the therapist or what the therapist was doing that resulted in successful transformation. What made the difference was what the client was doing internally.

People who checked in with a bodily 'felt sense' were much more successful in contacting and working through issues that kept them from being happy. Gendlin went on to extensively study and quantify how this process works. Focusing has had a huge effect in the realm of therapy and mindfulness in general.

What does Focusing have to do with meditation practice?

A lot.

The first foundation of Buddhist meditation practice is 'mindfulness of the body.' When you are aware of the body you are 'here and now.' Focusing helps you train your awareness to more quickly move from the cognitive realm to the direct 'felt sense' experience. It also trains you to discern many more distinctions in the internal process, allowing you to more quickly and skillful stay present to what is arising in the moment and in particular, to move through challenging experiences such as physical pain and emotional and mental turbulence.

Many dharma teachers recommend learning Focusing as a tool for understanding the dharma.

Do we do Focusing the whole year?

Dr. Gendlin, after many decades of teaching this technique, said that it takes about ten months of practice to really 'get' how this process works and to train the mind to shift to the 'felt sense' with more skill.

The first level of training in Focusing is "Focusing Partnerships," which is a ten month process. We'll spend more time on the technique in the first part of our year and then rely on Focusing as a core tool through the course.

The end result is that by the end of the year you'll have a great tool for your meditation practice, for understanding the nature of the dharma and as a way of relating better to others.

Is there a lot of homework and reading to do?

No. I've done enough year-long and multi year-long trainings to know that life has extensive demands and the last thing we need is the stress that comes with keeping up with a long bibliography. The course does have a recommended reading list, but only a few books that are required or heavily recommended.

However, throughout the year you will get regular updates with suggested short readings and resources you might find useful and inspiring.

What if I miss a session?

Life happens. While most people dislike missing a session because of the intimacy we build as a group, we go with the flow. You are expected to do your best to make it to each gathering, but if you miss, forgiveness comes quickly.

What are the monthly classes like?

The monthly gathering is made up of a group meditation, interpersonal meditation in a 1-1 format and time in the group to explore a topic either in small groups or large group presentation and discussion.

Class begins at 7:00PM and runs to 9:00PM. These are pretty cozy gatherings.

What are the weekend retreats like?

We begin and end the Year of Living Mindfully program with a weekend retreat. The first retreat is to get to know each other and to dive into the technology of Focusing, The final weekend is an integrative exploration looking back over the year and and at what lies ahead.

What are the daylong retreats like?

Daylong retreats have a specific theme (compassion, emptiness, etc) and are heavily experiential.

Where are these retreats held?

Retreats are non-residential and held in the DC area. This helps keep costs down. Many people have shared how grateful they are to sleep in their own bed at night.

What are these monthly 1-1 sessions?

Participation in the course includes a monthly 1-1 session with another participant. You might think of these as interpersonal meditation sessions using the Focusing technology. You will practice with each person sharing and as an active listener. A 1-1 session can be done in person and over the phone and can generally be accomplished in less than an hour.

What are the small peer group gatherings like?

Peer group gatherings are a time to come together as a sangha and cultivate our sense of community. You'll practice with others, share what is going on and how you are bringing mindfulness and compassion to what is arising in your life.

What about the 1-1 sessions with Jonathan?

Included in the tuition are three private sessions with Jonathan. These can be scheduled anytime during the year. Most people use this time for and in-depth Focusing session or to explore what is arising in their meditation practice and in their life.

What does this program cost and how do I pay for it?

Cost for this program is \$1850.00. Payment can be done in installments.

I've increased the tuition by \$100 over the past two years primarily because this year I'm offering my other daylong retreats to YLM participants by donation rather than the normal set fee.

How do you decide who gets into the program and who doesn't?

Applications are weighed toward those with the most experience in retreats and in length of practice and study. While it would be nice to include everyone interested, this program is designed to create an avenue for those who have practiced for a while and would like to go deeper.

When is the deadline for applications?

Applications are due on March 15th.

What if I want to learn more?

Contact Jonathan at jonathanfoust@mac.com to set up a time to talk.

You can read an overview description on the web at www.jonathanfoust.com.