

LONG BEACH MEDITATION

ISSUE 4: 2023



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LETTER FROM OUR GUIDING TEACHER

Dear Friends,

In the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition, we offer a chant at the conclusion of meditation each evening. We recite the words, “Time swiftly passes by, and opportunity is lost.” This is a direct reminder that another day has passed, and with it, valuable opportunities to be involved in the lives of those around us and truly present in our world. Each one of us has the capacity for immeasurable positive impact in this life. At the heart of each of our meditation traditions is the active exploration and realization of our most authentic self-nature. We study the Self, in order to better express and actualize the very best aspects of who we are, day after day.



The primary purpose of Long Beach (LB) Meditation is implicit in the name. We exist to practice and share the straightforward art of meditation. To meditate is to deepen our appreciation of this mysterious life. Time seated on the cushion, bench, or chair is time invested in allowing the body-mind to refresh and return to its natural, indivisible state of

being. Practicing meditation is a powerful support for the individual. The adage that we should put our own oxygen mask on first, before attempting to help those around us, is applicable to dharma practice. To sit, to breathe consciously, is to put on our own oxygen mask. We do this together. We demonstrate taking responsibility for ourselves and for one another in the simplest and more direct way. And as we do, our practice is transformative. As our collective achievement is emphasized, the underlying unity becomes apparent. From this point of view, all modes of travel or transport are “the raft to the other shore.” We are all “on board” in unique ways. In a certain sense, dharma teachings or the basic art of inquiry can serve as fuel for our journey.

Through our exposure to Buddhist teachings, we become acquainted with words like "enlightenment" and "awakening." These terms can feel exotic or abstract, and when misunderstood can even become impediments to our spiritual growth. What, after all, is enlightenment? When we practice, what do we enlighten? What is awakening? What is it that we awaken from, or to? What is truly involved in this exploration? These are all good questions to ask! We should not think of enlightenment as a distinct event in time. To do so forestalls our enlightenment here and now. The light of awareness is already and always apparent. Each one of us reflects, contains, transmutes, and shares this light through our own singular lens. To awaken is to realign with the fundamental presence that enlivens all things, without exception. Why not awaken to this right now? Time, after all, swiftly passes by.

Our collective meditation practice forms a solid foundation for an engaged, present life. As we share our days, we continue to grow and deepen in our work together. It is an exciting time for LB Meditation! The sphere of our activity is widening and developing. We are taking our practice into the out-of-doors, onto the beach, into urban gardens, and so essentially, into the vast and boundless spaces of our busy, messy, and beautifully complicated lives. It is encouraging and inspiring! We are building a community with deep local roots, and strong branches that reach out in many directions. Let's take good care of it.

As always, I welcome your reaching out to me directly at jokai@longbeachmeditation.org. Thank you for your many contributions and continued, valuable support.

Bows,

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Jokai Blackwell Roshi



FUNDRAISER

Nubia Macias, Sangha Member

Join us in celebrating Long Beach Meditation's 30th anniversary with a sound bath experience fundraising event!

Long Beach Meditation invites you to our 30th anniversary celebration, featuring a captivating soul bath. Hosted by the esteemed Rosamaría Segura and joined by special guest Franz Manfredi, this event promises an afternoon of community, relaxation, healing sounds, and mindfulness meditation.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, September 10th, at 3 pm, and make your way to 5100 E. The Toledo, Long Beach, CA, for an experience that will rejuvenate your mind and spirit. The suggested donation is \$50; please register in advance. Rosamaría Segura and Franz Manfredi, celebrated Long Beach Meditation teachers, will guide attendees through a captivating journey of sound healing, chanting, and mindfulness meditation. Their passion, skill, and dedication to sharing these practices make them cherished figures in the local Long Beach community.

In addition to the immersive Sound Bath experience, we will be raffling off a Private Sound Bath. Everyone in attendance will be entered in the raffle regardless of donation amount. By contributing generously and showing your support, you will play a critical role in helping Long Beach Meditation achieve its \$5,000 fundraising goal. These funds will enable us to continue providing our programs and services at an affordable cost to the wider Long Beach community. Take advantage of this



opportunity to relax, rejuvenate, and contribute to a meaningful cause. Join us in celebrating our 30th Anniversary and making a positive impact on the lives of others. For more information and to register, visit our website at: www.longbeachmeditation.org, or email info@longbeachmeditation.org.

SANGHA MEMBER HIGHLIGHT



Rey Barceló is the subject of this Sangha Member Spotlight. Rey has volunteered their time and talents to give Long Beach Meditation's YouTube channel a "facelift." They have edited Dharma talk videos into polished presentations. Rey has also clipped and posted some shorter videos to provide curious web surfers with bite-sized bits of timeless wisdom. By improving the quality of LBM's online

presence, Rey helps the sangha stay relevant and vital to curious seekers across our community. Rey's journey with Long Beach Meditation began about a year ago. "I had just moved into the

neighborhood and I was looking for a new place to sit," they explained. Rey said that they first heard of LBM when they met Franz and Kaletis Manfredi at a Tibetan Buddhist center in town. They encouraged Rey to give our sangha a try. Rey was pleased to get the invitation: "I was drawn to the gentle presence of the Long Beach Meditation teachers." Rey shared that they really appreciate LBM's



non-sectarian approach to the teachings, which allows them the freedom to explore the various iterations of Buddhism without being pressured to commit to a particular one. So, with their background in film production, Rey now feels called to serve the sangha by enhancing our YouTube page. A couple of videos that Rey is particularly proud of are "Keeping Our Practice on Track

with Jampa Kalsang" and "Simplicity, Patience, and Compassion with Jokai Blackwell Roshi." Upon viewing these videos, one will notice an unmistakable stylistic consistency and professional quality that Rey brings to their work. Each video has an informative thumbnail image and a soothing musical intro montage. The intro montage fades to reveal the Long Beach Meditation logo before launching into the content. It's a slick presentation. Long Beach Meditation is grateful to Rey Barceló for so generously sharing their gifts. Rey didn't come to our sangha as a complete novice. They have been sitting with various meditation groups for about six years, so their opinion is informed. "The sangha at Long Beach Meditation is my favorite one. I'm not just sayin' that!" Rey playfully admitted.

You can view the videos by visiting
www.youtube.com/@lbmeditation

THANK YOU for Your Service!



Travis Ott-Conn's journey with Long Beach Meditation began over 10 years ago with his participation in LBM retreats, offering yoga to support participants through their sitting meditation practice. His service to the organization has been of immeasurable benefit. With his approachable nature and calm presence, Travis became a familiar face to so many in our sangha.

We are sad to see him go and wish him and his family well in all the future holds for them. If you would like to stay in touch, you can reach him at tottconn@gamil.com

Retiring from the Board



Jenene Koehler has been a steadfast presence at LBM and has been here for some of its earliest iterations. Her 13 years of service on the board is a testament to her dedication to the dharma and this organization. We will miss her professionalism, historical knowledge, dry humor, and wise counsel. We will continue to see her at our programs when she's not busy playing pickleball, coaching her beloved sports teams, and supporting the community where she lives.

SERVICE DAY WITH SOWING SEEDS OF CHANGE

Alma Castro, Sangha Member



On Sunday, August 13th, the sangha made the trip out to Sowing Seeds of Change, a local urban farm, for a service day. The farm is located in an industrial area near the 710 ramp, adjacent to an elementary school and Chavez Park. We spent the morning picking weeds and collected A TON of trash. We picked up cans and large plastic items. One of our sangha members reported a pile of syringes to the City to ensure they were safely disposed of. After the clean-up our guiding teacher, Jokai Blackwell Roshi, led a guided meditation. Some of us sat while others engaged in walking meditation. As we sat in silence, we were able to hear the speeding cars off the the freeway, the breeze flowing through the plants, and the buzzing bees busy at work.



As a thank you, the founders of the farm gave away planters and squash for the taking. Our sangha members left the farm with big and bright smiles after a morning of hard work. The thoughtful gifts may have contributed to the smiles as well. On behalf of Long Beach Meditation, a big thank you to everyone who showed up with the best of vibes, ready to serve others. Long Beach Meditation will continue to look for new partnerships as we conduct more days of service throughout the year.



We look forward seeing you at the next one!

MINDFUL EATING

Len Kody, Sangha Member

Mindful eating is a practice that involves being fully present and attentive while consuming food. It goes beyond simply nourishing the body; it fosters a deeper connection with the food, the act of eating, and one's own body and mind. The benefits of mindful eating are numerous and can have a profound impact on overall well-being.

Enhanced Digestion: When we eat mindfully, we pay attention to the taste, texture, and aroma of our food. This heightened awareness triggers the body's relaxation response, which aids in better digestion and absorption of nutrients.

Weight Management: Mindful eating promotes a healthy relationship with food and discourages mindless eating. By being attuned to hunger and fullness cues, individuals are more likely to make balanced food choices, preventing overeating and supporting weight management.

Increased Satisfaction: By savoring each bite and fully experiencing the flavors, mindful eaters find greater satisfaction in their meals. This leads to a reduced tendency to seek out excessive amounts of food or turn to unhealthy snacks out of boredom or emotional reasons.

Emotional Regulation: Mindful eating encourages individuals to become aware of their emotions and triggers surrounding food. By acknowledging emotional eating patterns, individuals can find healthier ways to cope with emotions without turning to food for comfort.



Improved Body Awareness: Through mindful eating, people become more in tune with their bodies' hunger and satiety signals. This increased body awareness helps individuals respond to their body's needs more effectively and recognize when they are physically hungry versus emotionally hungry.

Reduced Stress: Engaging in mindful eating practices creates a calm and peaceful environment during meals. This relaxed state lowers stress hormones, such as cortisol, which can lead to healthier digestion and overall well-being.

Enhanced Enjoyment: Food becomes more than just fuel; it becomes a source of pleasure and delight. Mindful eaters appreciate the beauty and nourishment that each meal brings, fostering a positive and joyful relationship with food.

Encourages Intuitive Eating: Mindful eating aligns with the principles of intuitive eating, where individuals trust their bodies to guide their eating habits and make food choices based on internal cues rather than external rules or restrictions.

In conclusion, mindful eating offers a multitude of benefits that extend beyond the plate. It empowers individuals to create a harmonious relationship with food, fostering a deeper appreciation for nourishment and promoting overall well-being in both mind and body.



2023 Fall Retreat

Thursday, October 12th - Sunday, October 15th
at Yokoji Zen Mountain Center
with Jokai Blackwell Roshi
Registration details online.

SELF CARE

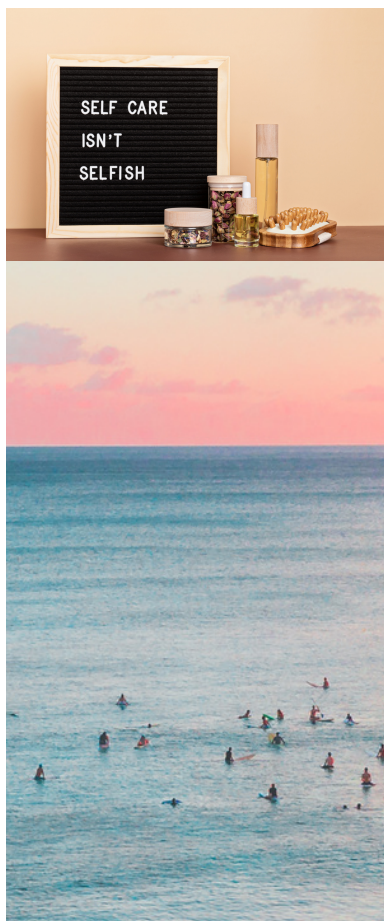
Rosamaría Segura, Teacher

When I decided to learn the teachings of the Buddha, I was interested in reducing my own suffering. Over time, my interest grew in understanding our shared human experience of suffering and being of service to others.

With mindfulness practice, I became aware of how my meditation training would sometimes feed the ego. I began to think that self-care practices were a bit selfish. But with time I've come to understand that self-care is essential to being available for others and myself. I've noticed that I can't fully help others when I haven't taken care of my own needs. Even after healing our old wounds, it's common to slip back into confusion, anger, and resentment.

Mindful self-care practices can help us witness the burdens, sorrows, and joys we carry in our everyday lives. By bringing caring awareness to everything we do, we can navigate daily difficulties with patience, love, and care. These qualities can be powerful sources of healing and transformation. Self-care meditation techniques can provide the strength to be fully present during both joyful and difficult experiences around us.

Mindful self-care practices have helped me cultivate self-awareness, self-trust, and self-compassion. They have allowed me to better understand and meet my own needs for a happy life. By practicing self-care and self-compassion, I have discovered ways to hold my heart struggles with tenderness. Through regular practice, I have also learned how to empathize with the sufferings of others without draining my emotional well-being. It's a beautiful journey of growth and connection.



Self-care helps us all survive. As we learn to trust in ourselves, we learn to feel grounded and safe. It's like stopping at a street crosswalk: we pause and wait for the green light to indicate that it is safe to walk. This act is a form of self-care. We have learned that we need to stop until it is safe to continue.

We pause because we value our lives. Mindful self-care practice is similar; it's taking care of our precious life. It's practicing gentleness and patience with ourselves, understanding our limitations, and cultivating deep compassion for ourselves and others. It's planting seeds of trust, patience, and kindness to navigate both joy and suffering. Keep nurturing yourself!



SUSTAINING MEMBERS

An outpouring of gratitude to our generous sustaining members, who keep Long Beach Meditation afloat through thick and thin. This quarterly newsletter is our offering in parallel, with news, events, and feature articles written by our teachers and fellow sangha members. We hope it will cast a glimmer of light and joy into your daily routine.

May we all meet again soon on the cushion.





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Sunday
Dharma



Monday
Come As
You Are



Wednesday
Embracing
Ourselves



Friday
Leap into the
Weekend